STUDIES IN INDIAN PHILOSOPHY-1

DHARMA

Man, Religion and Society

Studies in Indian Philosophy

BALBIR SINGH

1. DHARMA
   Man, Religion and Society
2. KARMA-YOGA
   The Hindu Ethical Discipline
3. ESSENCE OF BHAGAVAD-GĪTĀ
   An Intelligent Man's Guide
4. ĀTMAN AND MOKSHA
   Self and Self-realization

CONTENTS

there w[illegible] goodness [illegible] of man's highest nature. Interestingly, it is the concept of *dharma* as the principle of self-determination which occupies the pivotal position in the entire scheme of spiritual realization.

ABBREVIATIONS

AV.—Atharva-Veda
BG.—Bhagavad-*Gītā*.
Brih. Up.—Brihadāraṇyaka Upanishad
DS.—Dravyasaṁgraha
NK.—Nyāya-kusumāñjali
NM.—Nyāya-mañjari
NS.—Nyāya-sūtra
RV.—Rig-Veda
SBS.—Shaṁkara bhāshya on Brahma-sūtra.
TS.—Tattvārthādhigama-sūtra.
YV.—Yajur-Veda

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Since times immemorial it has been man's irrepressible desire to unravel the secrets of the working of the world in which he found himself and with which he was invariably in a relation of action and interaction. The more he delved into its mysteries the more he felt convinced that behind it there was something of a conscious plan which was incessantly unfolding itself in the creation of new things. He encountered the existence of a mind and the more he strove to grasp its working the more he found himself overtaken by a sense of awe and wonder. It was some such feeling which Kant had irresistibly developed in his scientific approach to man and the world that found expression in these words : 'Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe, the oftener and the more steadily we reflect on them : the starry heavens above and the moral law within'. What all his discoveries revealed to him was that the universe was an organic whole and that this whole could be properly understood and interpreted when its parts were first analysed and scientifically studied. This was the time for the formulation of various disciplines of philosophy, such as metaphysics, religion, ethics and other subsidiary branches. Each discipline had its own sphere and its own phenomena, and was studied with a purely scientific approach. It is this spirit of a free enquiry that was man's most precious possession, and philosophy is the recognition of this

spirit as expressed in his quest for truth. He may know the whole world, yet what is still of more value to him is the knowledge about his true being and essence. This passionate search for his true self is as old as his capacity to think. With the ever-continuing process of positive evolution the world is revealing new dimensions and man finds himself in a better position to understand and interpret himself. It is quite a different thing, however, if he diverts his attention to things that can really confuse him and lead astray from the path of his true quest.

I

Philosophy in India has been traditionally looked upon as the most fruitful of all the human pursuits (purushārthas). It has been regarded as a search for truth, a discovery of one's true being, or a philosophy of life. Such a philosophy had its birth when the Vedic Indian turned his attention to man and sought to study him in all his aspects. Perhaps the most important object before him was man in quest for happiness here and hereafter. So far as the desire for happiness here was concerned, he prayed to the deities for the grant of many gifts to him, such as good cattle, good crops, good progeny, plenty of wealth, a life free of disease, destitution, sorrow and so on. So far as the desire for happiness hereafter was concerned, it meant both heaven and immortality. Both these goals could well be understood as worthy of a human desire. The conclusions which the Vedic Indians sought to establish were as simple as their ways of thinking and living.

An elaborate scheme of ritualism was the aid to both these two different kinds of goals. The Vedic Indians believed their favourite deities to be the media of the fruition of their various ceremonies and sacrifices. Accordingly, we have innumerable hymns in the Vedas all directed to different deities who are generally regarded as the governors of the different aspects of the cosmos. Each god is conceived as perfect in his own function and the sole authority in his own sphere. In the beginning the various ceremonies and sacrifices tended to be quite a simple affair. Purified butter and grains were all that the priest needed to perform the sacrifice for his client. He officiated at all such ceremonies and all this was conducted in accordance with the Vedic spirit. The priest would get a good remuneration for all his labour. At this stage these sacrifices constituted the dharmas of the men in society. What they were enjoined on was the performance of various sacrificial acts. All formalities to be observed in their performance were already laid down in the Veda. It was the priest who was expected to have full knowledge of these procedural matters. These were dharmas laid down for man, and none was expected to neglect their performance, since sin was believed to descend on all those who refused to perform them.

In course of time the priests made it their sole monopoly to determine how and when different people could have their dharmas performed under their guidance. They became greedy and at times tended to show that the gods could not bestow their choicest fortunes on a man without their explicit approval. They claimed to be possessed of practical

knowledge which alone could be employed by them in securing all boons and gifts from the gods. They laid down their conditions and often were dictatorial in their attitudes. Amassing huge wealth and weilding celestial powers were their professions, and they were not what infact the Veda expected them to be.

But 'old order changeth yielding place to new'. This was not to continue for long, for the entire system of ritualism was defective in its functioning. It was left in the hands of unscrupulous priests who were concerned more with their wealth than with the welfare of their clients. All this was vehemently opposed by the Upanishads which represent the philosophical aspect the Vedic age. The *Brihadāraṇyaka Upanishad,*[1] for instance, says in utter contempt that the man who worships a divinity other than the self is a domestic animal of the gods, and it is remarked that while Yama, the god of death, has his abode in sacrifice, sacrifice has its basis in the fees paid to the priests.[2] Parodying the priestly procession in a sacrifice, the *Chhāndogya Upanishad*[3] refers to the procession of dogs, all chanting, 'Om, let us eat; Om, let us drink'. A still more damaging criticism of the cult of ritualism is offered by the *Muṇḍaka Upanishad*[4] whereall sacrificial acts are compared to shaky and unsafe boats, and those who resort to them under the delusion that they could lead them to a life of happiness are called fools. They cannot, thereby, avoid the agonies caused by bad deeds of the past. In certain Upanishads what is enjoined to be sacrificed is the life of mere transient pleasures and comforts. Besides the Upanishads, this idea found its expression in the *Gītā* with an equal

force. 'Some yogins offer sacrifices to the gods, while others offer sacrifice by the sacrifice itself into the fire of the Supreme'[5]. The *Gītā's* Karma-yoga is perhaps the most consistent and acceptable exposition of sacrifice as an aid to perfection. It is the sacrifice of the fruit which we must all undergo in order to purify our inmost being. What Karma-yoga teaches is that what is to be performed is an action, and what is to be sacrificed is its fruit. It is in the fire of 'knowledge-sacrifice' that the self is to be purified. Therefore, says the *Gītā*, 'some offer all the actions of their senses and the actions of the vital force into the fire of the yoga of self-control, kindled by knowledge'. Karma itself should be the medium for the performance of that sacrifice through which the self becomes purified—viz., the sacrifice of the desire for fruit of actions.

Accordingly, dharma comes to be defined in terms of the self's power of moral determination. A dharma is any action wherein the will comes to be determined by the self's own law. This law is called dharma. Dharma then, does not lie outside of the native capability of the self. It is the law of one's own self and requires an unconditional fulfilment thereof. It is here that we encounter a strictly philosophical interpretation of the concept of dharma. In what follows in the various chapters of this book it is this concept that will receive our attention. It is from the *Gītā* onwards, then, that begins the history of the philosphical expositon of dharma and the various schools seek to enrich it by means of their own arguments and explanations.

II

Philosophy in ancient India was the luxury of a few. Those who indulged in philosophizing were the 'rishis' or seers and they were, therefore, given the highest respect and held in highest esteem. They were concerned with the good of the individual as much as with that of the society. Not actuated by any selfish motives, all their thoughts and activities aimed at the welfare of all sentient beings.

But while it was one thing to indulge in speculations and arrive at conclusions based on logical coherence and consistency, it was quite another to apply them to the practical affairs of man. The ideal of dharma, for instance, was what an ordinary man could not practise, since what could possibly be the motive of his actions was some practical concern; there was nothing like a nishkāma action for him. It was, in other words, necessary to show him what his particular dharmas were, so that he could discharge them in their true spirit, even if imperfectly. 'Better indeed', says the *Gītā*, 'is one's own dharma, though imperfectly carried out, than the dharma of another, even if performed perfectly'[6].

If, then, the philosophers were concerned with theoretical implications of their various themes, those who sought to provide practical application thereof had their own problems. The fruits of the philosophizing of the rishis were sought to be transferred to the ordinary man's sphere by those concerned with the task of social reconstruction (loka-saṁgraha). There thus arose a distinct class of enlightened persons who sought to utilize the theoretical results of the various philosophers for the

purpose of practical efficiency and social solidarity. It is in these attempts that the various texts came to be composed for the application of the law of dharma to the different spheres of social activity. These texts are called 'dharma-shāstras' or 'dharma-sūtras'.

According to the Hindu view, there are four basic human values (purushārthas)—viz., artha economic prosperity), kāma (sex and aesthetic enjoyment), dharma (morality), and moksha (or liberation) The various texts (shāstras) were composed primarily with a view to providing assistance to those who wanted to pursue these four ends in an integrated life. Arjuna, for instance, is the *Gītā's* representative man and has a definite dharma to discharge as a member of the Kshatriya class, yet he is not prepared to do so under an alien impulse. What the *Gītā*, therefore, attempts to do is to show that certain duties devolve upon us in virtue of our being members of a social group the discharging of which in accordance with our moral law is not a matter of personal discretion. Certain duties devolve on all of us the performance of which is believed to be linked up with our perfection[7]. Naturally, perfection becomes the prerogative of one who has disciplined his will by selflessly discharging the duties that relate to his station, irrespective of whoever he is and whatever is his station. It is not *what* we do, but *how* we do what we do that really matters. What counts in the eyes of dharma is not the verb but the adverb. A soldier, for instance, has, in conformity with the nature of the work he is obliged to do, a determinate code of conduct set for him (svadharma). It is quite conceivable that at

times the discharging of his duties may entail much hardship and suffering, as in the case of Arjuna at the battlefield. But is he justified in abstaining from discharging his duties on such grounds ? Certainly not, for the spirit of dharma requires us to continue to do our duties as much in imperfect as in perfect conditions of life. Abandonment of action is not contemplated in the *Gītā* at any stage; absence of conscientious devotion to work, whatever it is that has fallen to our lot, is looked upon in the *Gītā* as reprehensible as sins[8]. The soldier, who has wilfully neglected the law of his spiritual being (svadharma), has forfeited the claim of his will to its true ethical autonomy. He has instead allowed its authority and autonomy to be usurped by an impulse foreign to the law of his own being, and thereby has incurred sin and caused bondage for himself. He has renounced his duty for no valid moral reason. The *Gītā* cites three kinds of renunciation that an active man may resort to; (1) He may renounce an obligatory act through sheer delusion, but this is positively dangerous, for it will impede the process of manifestation of his true self, the 'small still voice within', (2) He may renounce a dharma because it appears painful or entails in its performance physical suffering or pain, but renunciation of this kind can never ensure true happiness and satisfaction of the inner spirit, (3), And, therefore, that man, and that alone, is entitled to everlasting peace of mind who performs his dharma just because it ought to be performed absolutely and unconditionally. No temptation, no distraction is too irresistible for him to falter in his determination. Possessed of the autonomy of his

soul, he never hates the preformance of a dharma because of the disagreeable consequences the performance thereof might be attended with.[9] Such a renunciation is true sacrifice, and such a man is indeed, the knower of what sacrifice actually means. In this working in response to the call of the dharma of his essential self, he finds his real happiness, his true goal. He performs his dharmas for the sake of the happiness of others. (sarva bhūtahitam). His outlook is ever characterised by equanimity towards good and evil, pleasure and pain, gain and loss. This is what true yoga means (samattvam yoga uchyate). It is in the practice of such a yoga alone that a man can hope to find his good (nihśreyasa).

III

The need was, then, felt to formulate dharma in accordance with the requirement of the common man in different spheres of his activity. There arose in course of time a vast literature on the subject. We have, for instance, Dharma-sūtras of Gautama, Baudhāyana, and Āpastamba. Kautilya's *Artha-shāstra* was an attempt to take dharma into the sphere of polity. *Manu-smriti* is an attempt to bring out the application of dharma in the ethical and religious spheres. The various Dharma-sūtras concern themselves both with secular and religious laws. In most cases they study man in relation to his society. We shall illustrate this by reference to the attempt made by Manu. The *Manu-smriti* is a metrical work of 2685 verses, and is believed to contain the teachings of Manu expounded at his behest by his pupil, Bhirgu, to the sages

who were all keen to understand the nature of the dharmas of the various classes (varṇas).

The entire society as envisaged by Manu is classed under four groups, each with distinct spheres of dharmas and obligations. The basis of this classification is the "division of labour" or what is sometimes called "specialization of functions". The aim behind this classification was better efficiency in the discharge of one's dharma and better service to the society as a whole. This is what is erroneously, and often contemptuously called "Caste System".

The four classes in which the society came to be divided are—brāhmaṇas, kshatriyas, vaishyas, and shūdras. Each class was expected to devote itself to the performance of duties peculiar to it—brāhmaṇa to intellectual and spiritual pursuits, kshatriya to soldiering and maintenance of law and order, and protection of the society from external threat and aggressions; vaishya to agricutture, commerce, trade, industry, animal husbandry, and so on; and shūdra to the service of all others. All these classes could ensure perfect coherence, justice and harmony only if they worked in close liaison with one another. More or less a similar scheme of division of the society is to be encountered in Plato, viz., rulers soldiers and producers of goods of common consumption who roughly correspond to the brāhmaṇas, kshatriyas, and the shūdras. It was thought that such a division of labour will invariably result in greater and greater degrees of specialisation and acquisition of skill. What a wonderful idea, indeed ! But in course of time the entire scheme became so rigidly followed that it gave rise to castes and sub-

castes, groups within groups. Birth, not worth, became the right to continue in one's ancestral group. A brāhmaṇa's son, for instance, would become a brāhmaṇa and would be so respected. But in all cases the son of a brāhmaṇa was not at all worthy of such respect. He did not possess those basic qualifications to become a brāhmaṇa. There was no corrective to this growing rigidity. That is why emphasis come to be laid not on merit (guṇa) but on birth (janma).

Another classification is based on the concept of āshrama. The whole human life is divided roughly into four stages—brahmacharya, grihastha, vānaprastha, and saṁnyāsa. A brahmacharya was a student who was supposed to live and study under the guidance of a qualified teacher and observe the various norms, such as sex-abstinence, devotion to his teacher, study of the various religious texts, etc. A grihastha was a house-holder who was enjoined to lead a married life, perform certain ceremonies and sarcrifices, extend due hospitality to all strangers and participate in all tasks of social welfare and reconstruction. A vānaprastha was the man who sought to develop strong spiritual motivation in the forests, while a saṁnyāsin was one who sought to renounce all that was worldly and strive for spiritual enlightenment by undergoing various austerities.

The mind behind all such organizational schemes must indeed, have been quite mature and imaginative. In every aspect of the social life certain definite laws of behaviour were formulated, and no room was therefore, left for arbitrary choices and decisions. One could not in any sense claim

impunity from the duties that related to one's station of life. Only then could the society function in a stable and progressive atmosphare. Nothing can, then, be farther from the truth than to characterize Indian thought as either world-negating or other-worldly. It is true that the goal of life is admitted to be moksha, yet such an ideal is not realizable in vaccuum. The performance of dharmas relative to one's station or stage in life is the prerequisite to one's happiness and perfection. The idea was to make the spiritual aspirant realize that it was in the performance of his own dharmas that lay not only his own good but also the good of the society. The latter aspect was emphasized as much by the *Gītā* as by the Mahāyāna schools of Buddhism.

IV

The fact is that in India both the theoretical and the practical aspects of philosophizing have always proceeded *pari passu* with each other. The one aspect without the other has not much significance. If moksha is declared by common consensus as the highest human good, it is equally stressed that it is only the life of dharma that can attain this ideal. Hence both the end and the means receive equal emphasis in almost the entire Indian thought. This means that in order to have a balanced view of the Indian tradition we must study both the aspects together. It is then that the study of the philosophical perspective seems to show as if the Indians grappled with the notion of an ultimate reality without paying any attention to the claim of the society. In other words, what some critics have tried to show is that the Indians developed a philosophy of

the individual good and neglected the study of a social philosophy. How far such criticism is valid can easily be judged by the reader himself.

The one basic question to which the Indians sought to find a fitting reply was : How far can the results of philosophizing be relevant to the discipline of a social science. The various Dharma sūtras were meant to be the ramifications of such a discipline. The *Bhagavad-Gītā* may in a sense be regarded as a Dharma-sūtra. It sought to re-examine the entire question of the nature and sphere of dharma, and came to the conclusion that the traditional discipline of nivirtti (nivirtti-mārga) was too negative by nature to provide any guidance. Nor did it look upon its rival—pravirtti-mārga—as of much ethical significance, because it often encouraged indulgence in sensuous gratifications. The well-known discipline of karma (karma-yoga) is a unique ethical discipline that aims at both the individual and the social good. This discipline enjoins upon the agent to work in the spirit of sheer disinterestedness for the good of all sentient beings. We are here reminded of the question which Kant put to himself, "What are the ends which are also duties?" And the fitting reply he gave to this question was : 'They are our own perfection and the happiness of others'[10]. It is certainly impossible that the true happiness of serving others can ever originate in narrow, selfish minds. So long as we remain preoccupied with, and confined to, our selfish interests or ends we can never restore self to its ancestral authority; the deep rooted sense of egoism cannot be disavowed unless the self is enthroned to enact moral laws, objective in reference, universal in appeal, and valid for all

rational beings alike. If perfection is sought through obedience of such moral laws, there is no better ground for carrying on our operations than the social sphere itself; the one is complementary to the other.

The ancient Indian philosophers were convinced that, unless the individual was made to understand what his rights and obligations were as a member of his society, he could not be expected to respond to the social call in the correct manner. He could be expected to be socially responsive only when he was awakened to his various moral obligations. Whatever he was, he had a particular station in life and if he could discharge the obligations of his station he alone could claim to be truly happy and truly spiritual. We are here reminded of a similar theory propounded by F. H. Bradlay, "My station and its duties". One simply wonders at the serious ethical concern of the Indians who approache the various social problems from every possible point of view and offered their views after careful consideration. The various institutions, such as āshrama and varṇa, were created with a definite social motive and each was expected to play its part in the spiritual uplift of the individual and better efficiency of the society. Although we have not been able to offer a detailed explanation of these institutions, yet from our brief survey it is evident that the ancient Indians were serious about their task of providing a well-defined and broad-based framework of all the rights and obligations in conformity with which the individual was expected to behave in his society. What was sought to be shown was that if he had his spiritual aspirations, the society had its own claims

on him. Thus, it was the question of explaining how the two—the individual and the society—could live for each other, and yet ensure their own development through this cooperation. The results which the ancient Indians produced are really splendid. It is a matter of pride for us to know that what solutions we are offering today for sloving various social problems were envisaged by the Indians thousands of years before. Only a candid approach is required to make a correct assessment of their contribution to the development of a theory and practice of dharma.

Notes

1. I. IV 10
2. III. ix. 21
3. I. xii. 5
4. I. ii 7-10
5. BG., IV. 25
6. BG., IV. 27
7. BG., XVII. 45
8. BG., XVIII. 47
9. BG., XVIII. 7-10
10. *Kant's Critique of Practical Reason,* (Abbott's translation), p. 296.

Chapter II

NATURE OF DHARMA

I

Notwithstanding sharp differences among the various schools of Indian philosophy in regard to their quest for truth, there is, however, a considerable degree of unanimity in regard to the view that Being, as revealed in experience comprehends both spirit and matter. Whatever is real, admits of rational explanation. This line of reasoning divides them into three rival camps (1) In certain schools—for instance, Jainism, Sāṁkhya-yoga, and even the Pūrvamīmāṁsā—the real is the primacy of Being conceived as self and not-self. (2) In certain others—the Nyāya-Vaisheshika Vishishṭādvaita,—the parity of these two ultimate constitutents of Being is sought to be subordinated to the paramountcy of an all-inclusive divine will ; and(3) in the Upanishads, the two Mahāyāna schools of Buddhism, and Shaṁkara's Advaita-Vedānta, the real is— from a certain point of view—the absoluteness of Being, called ātman, prajñā, Brahman, vijñāna, etc. When we pursue the matter still further we find that Being mainfests itself at three different levels : the physical being (prakirti), the human being as both spirit *and* matter (jīva), and, lastly, the divine being as pure spirit (īshvara). We are here introduced to the realm of the multiplicity of beings (bhūtāni). The various schools conceive of the three constituents of Being—prakirti, jīva, and īshvara—as having their own

spheres and functions in the entire scheme of reality. All this, however, is characteristic of the conceptual standpoint.

We shall, indeed, be taking too much for granted if we did not specifically refer here to certain sharp, and even irreconcilable, differences of approach among the exponents of the absolutistic and the non-absolutistic traditions in regard to the nature of Being itself. As already remarked, the absolutists take Being to be the sole principle of explanation of beings, spiritual and physical. Non-being has its own significance and implications as a principle of explanation not of the real but instead of the unreal (prātibhāsika-sattā, or samvri-satya). Being is Brahman, and Non-being is māyā. From the standpoint of Brahman there is nothing else but itself. The non-absolutists, as pointed out earlier, conceive of Being and Non-being as characteristic of the objective nature of things and, therefore, as given in experience along with their other qualities. It now clearly emerges that the two categories for the absolutists are metaphysical in import, while for the non-absolutists they are only of epistemological significance. To put it in a slightly different way, whereas in the Vedānta-absolutism Being is the principle of explanation of the ultimate source of what is, for the non-absolutists it is just what circumscribes the bare existence of an object and forms part of our experience along with other qualities of this object.

If we ignore for the present the distinction of standpoints, all are agreed that, if the self is real, the not-self must be equally so. The real, then, is the organic unity of the self and the not-self. It is these

two constituents which are highly significant from the philosophical point of view and need to be thoroughly discussed in all their implications. Obviously, such an enquiry presupposes a transition from the giddy heights of an abstruse and abstract metaphysics to the comfortable levels of a scientific approach—in short, it is to be a transition from jñāna to vijñāna. This approach centres around the assumption that whatever claims to be displays a certain form of behaviour which is reducible to the concept of a law. The two orders of Being—the physical and the spiritual—represent, then, the totality of phenomena governed by their respective laws. This is a transition from the realm of the bare particulars to that of the concepts in terms of which these particulars could be scientifically explained. A law is a conceptual device for such a scientific explanation and aims at reducing phenomena of a certain nature to the order and system of a realm of experience. But what is this mysterious law as such ? And how did the Indians seek to apply it and with what results ?

A law is expressive of the general behaviour-pattern of the phenomena of a certain class or kind and seeks to bring out the spirit of unity underlying them. It signifies a movement from the empirical to the *a priori*, from the bare percept to the universal concept. In discovering a certain law we seek to transcend the realm of mere contingent experience so as to transplant ourselves into another where unity is ensured through conceptual determination. As such, a law points and pertains not to *what* particular phenomena take place here and now, but rather *how* in general phenomena, of a certain class or kind behave in the world around

us. As almost the entire edifice of the Indian tradition in philosophy rests on the concept of a law, I shall, therefore, take full liberty in explaining it in a way characteristic of the modern mode of explanation.

The two most important features of a law are its universality and necessity. A law must hold good in all cases and under all conditions. So it is impossible to think of cases in which it would admit of exceptions to its application. And if for certain known or unknown reasons it admits of exceptions to its working, it cannot be a law in the sense in which we take it to mean here. A certain uniformity is a law by virtue of its claim to determine the behaviour of objects of a certain class in absolutely the same manner. Thus, if we are to find contradiction in a certain uniformity when it is to serve as a law, this could be so only because it would assert that the same event could take place under different conditions or in different ways under the same conditions.

A law must also be necessary in its appeal and application. Whatever happens at a particular point of time happens because it could not have happened otherwise. It is from sheer necessity of its universal characteristic that a particular event takes place in a particular way. There is what may be called absoluteness about the mode of operation of a law, and, therefore, nothing conditional and contingent can be conceived as the ground of its operation and application. Perhaps the best way to make our point clear would be to say that a law operates with the same necessity as the three angles of a triangle have to be equal to two right angles.

If certain kinds of phenomena behave today under certain definite conditions, they must continue to behave in the same manner and under those very conditions. Only, then, could they be said to be law-abiding. Nothing can conceivably change the course of a law, and this means that it points to that aspect of Being which is by nature immutable and subject to the necessity of the operation of a law. All this order and regularity so conspicuously exhibited in the working of the various departments of nature is expressive of the inexorable sway of the necessity of a law. Whatever is, is subject to one law or other, but nowhere can anything be seen which is lawless. The laws constitute the discipline of nature and it ever abides by such a discipline. Things behave because they are bound by the discipline of a law. Nature, it follows, has its own reason which is ever active in its working.

However, to an unreflective observer the world around him is a mere aggregate of the particulars, a confused mass of sensible presentations which crowd in upon his consciousness at every moment of his waking life. Various kinds of events take place around him, but he is not interested in their multifarious aspects and implications if at that time they do not promise satisfaction of his immediate, or even remote, needs. What weighs with him most is not the consideration why or how these events take place, but rather which one of these will conduce most to the satisfication of his need. Nothing would make him active unless he felt convinced that he would thereby be adding to his pleasure or comfort. This only means that his perspective lacks a scientific orientation. The world for him is nothing but an

incomprehensible, loose multiplicity of things the desire for some of which make him active, while others leave him ever cold and indifferent. Often inspired by fond hopes of personal satisfactions he instinctively feels tempted to ascribe to nature certain anthropomorphic qualities and labours under his own make-beliefs that it works for the realization of all human ends. He lives in a world of his own making.

Contrast such a severely practical concern with the scientific outlook of an inquisitive mind. The world of his conception is not the bare aggregate of loose particulars but a coherent system, a cosmos animated by the spirit of eternal and immutable laws: it is a unity amidst diversity, an organic whole wherein there are distinct spheres of experience and activity governed by their respective laws. All laws. as we know, have their own peculiarities and their own phenomena to govern. Behind the unity and coherence of the phenomena of a particular department of nature there is the spirit of a law ever at work. This spirit is universal and aims at imparting order and unity to its sphere. All that claims to be law-abiding exhibits a rigid determination. So long as it remains law-abiding it cannot afford to be erratic in its behaviour. Nature is the totality of laws which operate with complete rigidity in their respective spheres. It is for the patient scientist to discover what these laws are and in what specific areas and under what conditions they come into operation. Each of the sciences undertakes the study of a limited department of nature, classifies, analyses, and compares phenomena of a certain kind, and seeks to discover laws of their

behaviour. It is because of the various serious scientific studies and researches that nature appears to the modern mind infinitely more than it did to the ancient inhabitants of this earth ; and it is, again, because of these specialized studies that its so-called mysteries are today being explained and interpreted in terms of laws well worthy of serious attention. Whatever, then, admits of explanation admits of being governed by a law. This is the rational faith which is in abundant evidence wherever man seeks to approach things with an open or unbiased mind.

Now, the various Indian schools seem to have reasoned along these lines and formulated the concept of a law. Laws are conceived as comprehending all the three constituents of Being—viz., Nature, Man, and God. In each case, however, a law manifests itself in a way characteristic of the constituent of which it is the law. It is the law alone, and nothing but that, which reigns supreme in each sphere of these three realms. There is no other or higher agency than the law itself by reference to which the behaviour of a particular kind of beings can be accounted for. Each realm of a specific kind of phenomena enjoys a certain measure of autonomy because it has its own law whereby they are governed. The law is immanent in the very nature of these phenomena. It is truly *their* own law. Nothing is imposed on them *ab extra*. Since it is the law which represents a common characteristic of their nature, by following its dictates they only follow the dictates of their own universal spirit. This shows that the entire realm of Being is at heart law-abiding and that the procedure followed in the determination of phenomena by means of laws

appropriate to them leaves no room for either arbitrariness or chance. These are the broad outlines of the Indian approach to the conception of a reality sought to be cast and explained within the strictly rational framework. In what follows henceforward it will be our endeavour to explain how the various Indian systems conceived of the entire realm of Being as intricately woven into the fabric of a completely rational and deterministic universe.

II

Let us begin by pointing out that the concepts of self and the not-self are mere abstractions from the strictly scientific point of view. What in fact our experience reveals are beings, spiritual and non-spiritual, and when we speak of laws characteristic of the two realms of matter and spirit we are anxious to reduce them to the order and system of a cosmos. Nothing here is taken for granted, nor is anything excluded from the necessary and universal application of laws in terms of which alone can such a cosmos be rendered intelligible. As stated before, all that is, is subject to the necessary determination of a law. If it is a spiritual being it is subject to the determination of dharma, and if it is a physical being it is subject to the determination of karma. Our concern in the present chapter is with dharma, the law of spiritual determination. The best equivalent to this Indian concept is to be found in Kant's notion of the moral law. What is worthy of special attention here, however, is the fact that dharma is one of those key concepts of Indian philosophy which have not been approached in their true, original import and about which a great deal of misunder-

standing still persists in the minds of our modern scholars. It is all the more necessary for us, therefore, to undertake a comprehensive exposition of this key concept and bring out all its implications.

The peculiar phenomena with which we are now concerned are souls, or more appropriately, spiritual beings. Each can claim to be real only when it is conceived as having a specific function to discharge and a specific purpose so realize. Two questions clamour for our immediate attention here :- (1) What is the nature of the specific function which a spiritual being must discharge so as to be true to its essential nature ? And (2) what is this specific purpose which a spiritual being must realize so as to provide all its pursuits and activities a meaningful orientation ? As regards the former, it is argued that the specific function of a spiritual being consists in the determination of all activity by means of dharma, the necessary and universal law which is immanent in its nature. Dharma, it follows, is the law on which a perfectly spiritual being would necessarily act. It would behave in a manner befitting its natural integrity, there being in it not the least possibility of deflection from its true nature by anything non-spiritual. It is what binds one unconditionally, absolutely, and categorically. As the law of conscious, intelligent selfhood it comprehends all human souls and determines them to act in strict conformity with its spirit. Whatever is spiritual, God and the souls, is subject to the necessary determination of dharma. As such, a spiritual being can be said to discharge its function only when it exhibits dharma in all that it does. All this is succinctly summed up by the *Mahābhārata*

thus : 'Dharma is that by which one is determined to act and by which all beings are sustained because they are determined by it'[1].

As regards the latter question, it is insisted that all human activity, whether the source of determination is spiritual or non-spiritual, must be teleological in character, but the one grounded in the former is unique in the sense that the purpose worthy of realization is immanent in it (svayaṁ-prayojana-bhūta)[2]. Now the question arises: What can this purpose be ? The reply given is that it consists in the deepening of one's spiritual, inwardness, for this is the sort of a good which a being like man can, consistently with his higher nature, aim at and realize. Kaṇāda, the author of the *Vaisheshika-sūtra*, had the root of the matter in him when he proceeded so define dharma as the consummation of the process of spiritual development which is at once the condition of all goodness and the good[3]. Jaimini, the author of the *Mīmāṁsā-sūtra,* also defines dharma as conducive to good which is no other than self-realization.[4] This may have been the reason why a non-theistic school like the Pūrvamīmāṁsā in the earlier stage of its development accepted dharma as the highest among the three values (tri-varga), the two others being artha and kāma. Even in the Kalpa-sūtras dharma signifies the highest ideal of realization. As we shall explain later, the two Mahāyāna schools of Buddhism—Vijñāna-vāda and Mādhyamika—looked upon dharma as the ultimate priniciple about man and the universe.

It follows that dharma is the law characteristic of an absolutely perfect spiritual being and thereby

points to a distinct sphere of its operation. It is immanent in the inmost being of every soul. Therefore, to say that soul is the truth is also as good as to say that dharma is the truth. This is the metaphysical explanation of the concept of dharma and, as we shall point out later, it is in this sense that certain systems have elevated it to the status of the ultimate truth. On the conceptual plane, then, dharma is the absolute reality. It comprehends not only the spiritual and the non-spiritual phenomena but also determines the results of their behaviour, this view being a corollary to the general assumption that the spiritual principle alone can guide and determine the activity of the non-spiritual (jaḍa). The example sometimes given in this context is that of the soul in a body. In the *Sāṃkhya-kārikā*[5] the mutual dependence of the spirit and matter is brought out by the simile of the lame and the blind, the former placed in a superior position.

While there is complete unanimity among the various Indian systems as to the nature of dharma in the sense explained above, signs of schism in their ranks appear, however, in regard to the question of its metaphysical status. The absolutists argue that dharma is the highest truth insofar as it represents the law of essential selfhood beyond which nothing real can be conceived. What we call the eternal moral order of the universe is expressive of the mode of operation of dharma in the determination of the course of those events and conditions which take place as a result of the behaviour of the two constituents, viz., the spiritual and the physical beings. This order is the objective counterpart of the

spiritual essence of man. Such a line of reasoning seems to have commended itself to the Indian philosophers for three main reasons; (1) Since the transcendent aspect of reality defies all modes of determination, it could be humanly represented as the law of absolute goodness (nihshṛeyasa). Good, then, becomes an integral or intrinsic attribute of reality insofar as it comes to be humanly conceived as the counterpart of the essential being of man and, therefore, the object of realization by him. (2) Although, however, the self is intrinsically devoid of the capacity for activity, yet under characteristically human conditions it comes to be conceived as capable of acting on that law of goodness which it is assumed to have in common with, or corresponding to, the represented character of reality. The good, then, in order to be realized must be the mark and the measure of a will determined by this law. (3) It is pointed out that, since dharma is a concept characteristic of a highly discursive understanding, it is necessary, therefore, that it should be represented to the human consciousness through an equally perfect and concrete source, personal and impersonal. As we know, the Veda is said to be the representing agency of dharma. The *Bhāgavata*[6] and the *Mīmāṁsā-sūtra*[7] hold that the Veda as the impersonal authority of the highest truth can alone be accepted as the source of the manifestation of dharma. Most Hindu texts and schools look upon God as the personal agency of the manifestation of the spirit of dharma. The Upanishad[8] quotes a seer exclaiming in sheer ecstasy, 'I am the first-born of rita'. This view is undoubtedly an important feature of the development of the

Hindu philosophical perspective, but has not been seriously considered so far. However, we hope to return to it in a later chapter.

Let us pursue the implications of this development still further. In their explanation of points (1), (2) and (3)—corresponding to what we propose to call, respectively, the Indian view of religion, ethics, and metaphysis—the various Hindu schools seem to have been convinced of the need of evolving what may be called a "representational procedure" for the ostensible reason that, in the absence of man's conscious grip over his partly unrealized spiritual nature, the danger of his succumbing to the dictates of the sensuous self (kāmātman) was out of all proportion to his power of moral determination. Therefore, all their optimism about the ultimate success in the realization of the spiritual nature could hardly beguile them into overlooking the important fact that all the emphasis they laid on the need of cultivating a discipline of dharma would be of little avail unless a constant, living communion with an objective, impersonal ideal preceded and even ensured volitional determination. It was only such an ethical ideal that, the Indians argued, could serve as the constant source of inspiration of will in the conquest of the lower self, resulting in the realization of the higher self the reality of which is accepted by all the Indians.

But one might still ask : why is this characteristic a fundamental mark of Hindu ethics alone ? What did Socrates actually mean by saying that knowledge is virtue ? Aristotle misunderstood him on the ground that he forgot the irrational part of

the soul and did not take notice of the fact of moral weakness which leads a man to do wrong.[9] But what Aristotle himself forgot is the fact that by "knowledge" Socrates did not mean intellectual conviction of what is wrong and right but a state of complete "self-determination" on the dawn of which virtue becomes just the antithesis of irrationality. Trained in the Socratic tradition, Plato conceived of virtue as consisting in the act of determination of the volitional and the sensual aspects by the rule of reason[10], so that it may be possible to become "like the divine so far as we can, and that again is to become righteous with the help of wisdom".[11]

However, although God is good, yet he is not the Good which has its own being as the model of the pattern which he follows in the creation and governance of the world. Since for Plato "God is the personification of the absolute Idea, the two come to be looked upon as identical. That he identified God with the Idea of the Good may readily be judged from the attributes that are ascribed to them. Thus understood, God becomes in his school that ultimate principle or the supreme wisdom by the side of which all human thought pales into insignificance, that supreme justice, law-giver, and the highest law ruling the beginning, the end, and the middle of things, that pure reason which has nothing to do with matter or with evil.[12] Spinoza sought to keep up his very tradition by emphasizing that "the ultimate aim of the man who is controlled by reason, that is, the highest desire with which he strives to restrain all the others, is that which impells him to conceive adequately himself and everything that can fall within the scope of his

understanding[13]." It is such a man who "is always possessed of the true satisfaction of soul,"[14] and "conscious by a certain eternal necessity of himself, of God. and of things, he never ceases to be."[15] Curiously enough, this very mode of reasoning finds its ablest expression in Kant, for whom the moral law connotes the highest reality which man is in his in most being. For very much the same reason as Plato and the Hindu thinkers, he, too, was led to the necessity of postulating a conscious, personal agency—God—for the effective operation of this law in relation to man and the world. He could, then, hardly resist the conviction that "the moral principle admits as possible only the conception of an Author of the world possessed of the highest perfection. He must be omniscient, in order to know my conduct up to the inmost root of my mental state in all possible cases and into all future time ; omnipotent, in order to allot to it its fitting consequences, similarly, He must be omnipresent, eternal, etc. Thus the moral law, by means of the conception of the *summum bonum* as the object of a pure practical reason determines the concept of the First Being as the "Supreme Being"[16]. Since God is conceived here as the embodiment of the moral law, the goal comes to be explained in terms of the self's effecting "harmony" with the divine will. It is "in this manner the moral laws lead through the conception of the *summum bonum* as the object and final end of pure practical reason to religion, that is, to the recognition of all duties as divine commands, not as sanctions, that is to say, arbitray ordinances of a foreign will and contingent in themselves, but as essential laws of every free will in itsefl, which,

nevertheless, must be regarded as commands of the Supreme Being, because it is only from a morally perfect (holy and good) and at the same time all-powerful will, and consequently only through harmony with this will, that we can hope to attain the *summum bonum* which the moral law makes it our duty to take as the object of our endeavours',.[17]

Notes

1. Dhārṇād dharmo ityahur dharmo dhāryate prajāḥ, Karṇa-parva, 69. 59.
2. *Tantra-rahasya*, p. 70
3. Yato' bhyudaya niḥshreyasa siddhiḥ sa dharma. Vs. I.i 2.
4. I. i. 2
5. 21
6. Veda prāṇihito dharma hya dharmastad viparyayaḥ.
7. I. i, 2
8. Taitt. Vp. III. x-5 Aham asni, prathamajaṛitasya
9. *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1145b.
10. *Republic*, Book IV.
11. *Theaetet us*, 176 b 1-3.
12. *Republic*, VI 506 ff VII 517.
13. *Ethics*, Part IV Appendix.
14. Ibid., Part IV. 42.
15. Ibid.
16. Kant's *Critique* of *Practical Reason*, Abbott's translation, P. 238.
17. Ibid., p. 226.

Chapter III

THE METAPHYSICS OF DHARMA

From what has been said in the preceding chapter it follows that the Absolute can never be the object of metaphysical investigation. It is the presupposition of all Being : it is in itself neither Being nor Non-being of the type with which we are familiar in the world of experience. Metaphysics as the study of Being and Non-being, therefore, must pertain to the realm of mere "appearance". Accordingly, in what follows in the remaining chapters, we shall concern ourselves with the realm of positive experience, knowledge and activity, hoping to return to the discussion of the ideal of the absolute realization towards the end of the book.

We shall begin by pointing out that the Absolute cannot be both reality and appearance. A reality that admits of two aspects, or is experienced in two ways, cannot be the highest reality. What the Indians seek to point out, therefore, is the fact that the distinction between reality and appearance is the outcome of the distinction between the standpoints of intuition and intellect. Each seeks to present its own reality in terms of its own native constitution. We have then two different notions of reality, each valid, however, from a particular standpoint. And this obviously means that what makes the realm of mere appearance from the standpoint of intuition is the world of reality from the standpoint of intellect.

On descending from the giddy heights of intuition to the level of intellect, the absolutists find themselves in substantial agreement—in certain respects, at least—with the non-absolutists. The implications of this agreement are diverse and will engage our attention at different intervals. For the present we shall proceed with those that are relevant to our immediate purpose.

I

The most remarkable outcome of the conceptual approach is that the indeterminable comes to be conceived as determinable. The reality now presents itself as something concrete—as much significant from the theoretical, as from the practical, point of view. As necessarily positive, it comprehends all beings, both physical and spiritual. Although transcendent (parā) to both, insofar as they are forms of its manifestation, it is also immanent (aparā) in both of them. In certain systems this reality is called God (Īśvara), while in others it is given an impersonal form. In the case of man it is conceived as the goal as well as the motive-force of all moral activity; in the case of the physical universe it is the ultimate abode and the intelligent principle which ensures its ordered, harmonious functioning. Generally, this reality, as the ground both of the spiritual and the material aspects of Being, is conceived in a relation of identity and difference, respectively. It is in this context that we hear of the two notions of Being and Non-being (sadasat).

Now contrast the two conceptions of reality. Whereas in the one case all the three constituents—God, man and nature—are reduced to nothingness,

in the other their reality as beings is affirmed, and they are sought to be integrated in an organic whole—conceived as the unity of the whole and its parts. Thus, whereas on the absolutistic view the Ultimate recognises no Being or beings, on the intellectual plane the contrary is the case. Whatever is, is real and whatever is real is a being. Three different grades of Being are admitted here : the physical being (prakriti) as inert and unconscious (jaḍa) : the human being as both spiritual and physical (jīva), and the supreme Being as the ideal of spiritual realisation, and the life and light of the physical universe (paramam purusham). The most significant point to note here is that these three levels of Being are sought to be welded into the unity of the whole by means of what, *faute de mieux*, shall henceforward be called the 'moral law'. Obviously, our aim here is first to explain the concept of the moral law.

Our first concern is with what represents itself as the ground of all physical beings, called prakriti. Prakriti in itself is a mere passive, inert stuff of matter. It is only the law appropriate to its nature that imparts to it activity, movement or motion. This is the causal law, called karma. Certain Indian systems believe, however, that for formulating an adequate notion of prakriti there is the need for another notion besides that of the causal law—namely, of purpose or end. The Sāṁkhyas, for instance, contend that prakriti evolves in the form of a beautiful world for the enjoyment of beings who must be spiritual in character. This is the well-known 'design argument' which we shall explain at length at a later stage.

Man, the other constituent of the whole, is in respect of his lower nature the ground of the various kinds of mental processes or phenomena, such as desires, instincts, emotions, sentiments, likes and dislikes. All these are conditional and contingent by nature. They point to their corresponding objects in the external world and are related to them by means of a natural relationship, either that of attachment (rāga) or that of aversion (dvesha). Pleasure and pain (sukha-duḥkha) are the two generic experiences, conditioned by their respective attachments and aversions. Since all such experiences arise from natural phenomena, they are invariably governed by the causal law. Thus, the causal law covers not only the mechanical causation of bodies but also, from one point of view, all human action and experience. At this stage man is a mere agent of the various blind and mechanical forces of nature. All that he does is the outcome of natural necessity, and so long as his consciousness and volition remain conditioned by this necessity he cannot claim anything distinctly human about him. All his behaviour is at bottom a mere play of the various natural dispositions ever struggling to ensure pleasure and shun pain.

However, man is more than a mere bundle of sensuous urges and passions. It seems germane to the course of our discussion to refer here to the Indian view of reality as the all-inclusive unity of man and prakriti. But where shall we search it? Assuredly, any conception of it which is formulated by reference either to man as a natural being, or to prakriti, must be miserably inadequate. Both, as we have seen, are governed by the causal law, and can,

therefore, lead us only to the conception of a cosmic order which is subject to natural necessity (saṁsāra). However, there is another sphere which also clamours for recognition as the sole condition and content of all human knowledge and activity. We can apprehend its nature only when we are determined to rise above all our natural limitations, and act in a rare atmosphere of freedom from the inexorable sway of the mechanical necssity of prakriti. The moment we have transcended these limitations, even in a small measure, we not only apprehend the inadequacy of the various contending inclinations to provide us with the kind of satisfaction we need, but are also unswervingly convinced that we are in truth essentially different from all that is conditional and contingent in our sensuous natures. At times there arises in us an irresistible feeling of revulsion against the various allurements of sensibility and, consequently, we become intensely aware of our bondage and limitations. We then complain of the strong hold of the various natural forces on us, of our being bewitched by them, and of their impelling us to do what we think we ought not to do. Unless Arjuna, the *Gītā's* typical human being, was in some sense aware of something higher that he valued more, of something that made its power and presence felt in his very consciousness, not fitfully but steadily, he would hardly have complained : 'My very being is stricken with the weakness of pity and my mind is confused as to what I ought and what I ought not to do.' Nor could he have reason for speaking of the mounting force of the inclination of pity. In all this he was not aware that in complaining of the irresistible urge of the inclination he was revealing

only a loose and inadequate grasp over that part of his being which alone could show him the path to truth. It was this part which had raised the banner of revolt against all that resisted its moral influence and its useful results, but Arjuna was quite ignorant of this higher aspect of his being. Thus, instead of asking what it was that struggled for mastery over his unmanliness, he wanted to know what it was that impelled him to commit sin, even against his will. Evidently, he was aware of being pushed to a wrong direction, but what made him so aware was all the time eluding the grasp of his confused mind. He could hardly understand then that the very expressions he employed to describe the influence of the inclination of pity pointed to something transcendent, to something indefinable. What he needed was a complete break from his natural framework, for only then could he have understood that duty had a decisive hold upon him, stronger than that of any transient desire, and exercised an influence over him quite different in kind and strength from anything to be found even in the most engaging desire. So long as his consciousness continued to be befogged by 'sentimentality' (hridayadaurbalyam) he could not know that duty had its own law, its own influence, and its own sphere of operation.

It would be taking too much for granted, however, if we were to assume that the performance of duty presupposed just that sort of a spontaneity which was so conspicuously present in the pursuit of an object of ordinary desire. The question, then, is not why a man succumbs to the influence of various natural dispositions, nor yet how he can be

made to see wherein his duty lies, but whether he could be made to realise that there is something in him so unique and so powerful that can determine him to act lawfully. As we know, an act of duty is the outcome not only of the power of moral appreciation, but also of the power of moral determination. The one by itself is not adequate to ensure an act of duty. A man may see what he ought or ought not to do in a particular situation, and yet may not act either way because of the lack of the corresponding power of volitional determination. Contrariwise, a man may have a strong will to do what he believes is right, yet may lack the necessary insight and fail to see that what he believes to be right is in fact wrong. So, a truly spiritual life presupposes some sort of a necessary relationship between the two. Arjuna initially lacked both. What he needed was an objective universal perspective whereby he could determine his volition. Had he been possessed of it from the beginning, he would have easily grasped the underlying spirit of a universal law. If he had acted in the way in which the sprit of objectivity required him to act, he would have effected a complete rapport with his inmost self—that is to say, he would have acted in a manner in which any rational being would necessarily act. It is here that the power of moral determination completely accords with the power of moral appreciation. This is expressive of the spirit of absolute objectivity, called the moral law. It is the law of a completely spiritual being. Whereas God is the ideal embodiment of such a law, man displays it only in degrees, higher or lower.

The moral law, then, is representative of the

absolutely spiritual beings, whether the gods, or God. As such, the moral law is the highest conceivable reality. Although immanent in each self, it transcends every particluar human self, insofar as the latter falls far short of its objective and universal spirit. In this sense it serves as the ideal for human beings to attain. As the counterpart of the rational nature of self, it is conceived as the ground of explanation of the entire universe, both in its spiritual and in its physical aspects. That is how the various Indian systems, as we shall presently see, conceive it as constituting the eternal moral order of the universe. Whatever happens in the moral and the physical aspects of Being has the sanction of the moral law behind it. In neither aspect is there the possibility of arbitrariness or irregularity because in its functioning Being is governed by the supreme moral law.

It follows, then, that, whereas a spiritual being would necessarily follow the dictate of the moral law as essentially his own, a physical being, on the contrary, would display its law unconsciously in submitting to the requirement of a regular behaviour. Like a law of nature, dharma connotes the spirit of objectivity, but, unlike it, represents the essential nature of spiritual beings alone. Whether we acknowledge its universality or not, it is still a law valid for all rational beings. The point which calls for special attention in the present context is that the moral law, according to the Indians, is the ground of all the laws of nature, the contention being a corollary to the general assumption that self as conscious can alone guide and determine the activity of the not-self as essentially unconscious.

But whereas the physical beings unconsciously follow it in their behaviour, man is at times tempted to defy its operation in him because he is neither wholly unconscious like the physical beings nor wholly conscious like the Supreme Being or God. It is only for this reason that the moral law makes its power and presence felt in man as the categorical imperative. In view of our preoccupation with a different theme here, we postpone discussion of the nature of the categorical imperative to a subsequent chapter.

II

Nothing, indeed, would be a more fitting tribute to the philosophic genius of the Vedic Indians than to acknowledge their contribution to the evolution of a line of thinking which profoundly influenced the subsequent course of a substantial part of the Indian thought. We have pointed out in the preceding chapter that the Vedic notion of the Indeterminable (tad ekaṁ) seems to have helped the Upanishadic thinkers shape their conception of Brahman as the Absolute. What we need to be constantly reminded of is the fact, however, that the Vedic Indians were neither prejudiced by any prior record of speculation, nor lacking in the spirit of free enquiry into the nature of Truth. Their philosophic insights and metaphysical conclusions are undoubtedly of singular importance.

When looked at from the conceptual standpoint, the One is simply the moral law in the Vedic tradition, and it is called rita. It is the highest metaphysical truth (satyam). The Absolute is viewed as Self (purusha),[1] which in its nature and function, is

conceived as the objective, impersonal law. It is the ground of rational explanation of all that happens in the moral and the physical aspects of the cosmos. As essentially spiritual in nature, it imparts to these two realms order and harmony. Since it is the principle of absolute rational determination, nothing irrational or capricious can ever be possible in such an order. What at times seems irrational has behind it the rational principle of its explanation, and cannot be so characterized from the point of view of this transcendent reality. There is no room for anthropomorphism here.

Rita manifests itself in the physical universe as the ground of determination of the various phenomena. It reigns supreme everywhere, in the sky, in the sun, in the mountain, in the sacrifices, and in truth.[2] Heaven and earth are what they are by reason of rita.[3] 'The dawn follows the path of rita, the right path, as if she knew it before. She never oversteps the regions. The sun follows the path of rita.'[4] In fact, the entire universe is founded on rita and moves in it.[5] It is completely autonomous in its functioning ; not even gods can trangress its supreme authority.

In the moral sphere rita stands for justice and truth. It is by reference to it that the Vedic Indians developed their notions of merit (puṇya) and sin (pāpa), thus anticipating what has been generally called the law of karma. It is stated that the gods assess the merits of thoughts, utterances and deeds from within.[6] They dispense rewards and punishments strictly according to the moral quality of human deeds. Satya is sometimes used as synonymous with rita. Whatever conforms to the objective spirit of

rita is satya or true ; whatever does not is patently false or anrita. Accordingly, both rita and anrita come to be understood in moral contexts as virtues and vices, respectively. Thus, in the moral, as in the physical, aspects of the universe rita connotes the objective spirit of an ordered whole characterized by perfect harmony of purpose. There is in it no room either for impunity from its determination, or for caprice in its operation. If anything happens in a particular way it so happens because there is behind it the hidden spirit of rita. In the working of the cosmos there is no anrita. If it exists anywhere, it exists only in the arbitrary will of man.

These are, however, only the bare outlines of the idealistic tradition of the Vedic age. While we may not have brought out all its salient features here, the underlying idea is fairly clear. Undoubtedly, it has a profound appeal for a theoretical understanding about the nature and working of the universe as a whole. The conclusions arrived at have their own rationale and, as we shall presently see, did make their impact on the subsequent development of the Indian thought. It is on the practical side, however, that the Vedic tradition springs a great surprise. We have here in view the cult of sacrifice, and the various subsidiary practices which are obviously inconsistent with the highly philosophic trend and temper of the age. Initially the idea behind the performance of sacrifice might have been purely ethical, namely, to empty the mind of all selfish propensities and egoistic feelings. So it was the spirit behind them that mattered more than anything else. Gradually, the entire procedure tended to become more and more complicated and

gave rise to cumbersome, elaborate sacrifices as also to a special class of professional priests who, as it was believed, could alone officiate at them. The very notion of sacrifice came to be invested with a special meaning, significance and sanctity. In support it was claimed that the various gods attained their divine status because of sacrifices. In course of time excessive greed for possession of material goods, social status and authority replaced the original simple spirit. The altars of temples remained blood-stained for the greater part of the year. Even human beings, let alone animals, were not spared from being sacrificed in the fond belief that they would thereby earn the merit of going directly to heaven. The unshakable conviction among the common populace was that the gods could be propitiated only by means of sacrifices, and that it was utterly irrelevant to the fruit of these sacrifices as to who happened to be the victim. The priests always claimed the lion's share in these offerings and were clever enough to effect gradual transfer of power from the gods to themselves. Belief in magic and witchcraft came to have its grip over the minds of innocent people. A substantial part of daily life was devoted to the sacrifical rites and ceremonies, and their performance came to be gradually identified with duty. All ills and afflictions of life, it was believed, could be cured only through magic and the sacrificial rites.

All this is evidently expressive of the wide gulf between the philosophic mood of the age and the erroneous notions of common morality in the perpetuation of which the unscrupulous priests played a leading role. But why did this gap arise ? Two

points are worthy of special attention here. Firstly, philosophic wisdom, as taught in the *Rig-Veda,* seems to have remained for a long time the sole monopoly of the hermits and sages (rishis) and, therefore, did not penetrate to the fabric of the common man's morality. Strangely enough, this monopoly seems to have continued unabated even during the Upanishadic period, till at last it found itself opposed tooth and nail by the *Gītā's* conception of 'social solidarity' (lokasaṁgraha). It is, then, no wonder if in the absence of any positive guidance in the matter of what was worthy of pursuit and what was not, the common man was irresistibly swayed by the natural propensities of his mind. And, secondly, the *Atharva-Veda,* which is a book of sorcery and witchcraft, continued to provide stimulation for these natural propensities and achieved remarkable success in turning the tide to its own direction. The result was the common belief that what could not be easily and swiftly attained through moral rectitude, could be attained by means of the magic of sacrificial rites. This belief so tightly gripped the common man that he was not prepared to go beyond what he thought was the most natural and obvious course for him to follow. The sway of Vedic ritualism continued unabated until it encountered stiff opposition from the highly philosophic temper of the Upanishads.

Nevertheless, the Upanishads could hardly afford to ignore the profound insights of the Vedic seers. In the *Taittirīya Upanishad* the seer is in firm grasp of the truth when he exclaims in confidence : 'I am the first-born of rita earlier than the gods and the centre of the immortal'.[7] The *Katha Upanishad* is convinced that the real is identical with rita[8].

Another term used for rita in certain Upanishads is dharma. The *Brihadāraṇyaka Upanishad* teaches that 'there is nothing higher than dharma'[9]. Dharma as the highest reality is sometimes identified with satya. Thus, whatever is real is rational and vice versa. In the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka,* the supreme Brahman is conceived as the representation of both rita and satya[10].

So far, we have followed the Vedic thought in its assertion, first, that the highest truth does not admit of any representation; and second, that consequent upon conceptual representation of it the truth is the moral law. In both these respects, the Upanishads, as we have shown, are in complete agreement. And, not unsurprisingly, what is true of the Upanishads is equally true of the *Gītā.* It seems unprofitable, therefore, to restate what in its broad outlines has already been stated. We shall refer to this aspect of the teaching of the *Gītā* when we discuss the three notions of God, self and perfection in the later chapters. There are also certain systems, like the Nyāya-Vaisheshika, the Prābhākara school of Pūrva-mīmāṁsā. etc., which have consistently followed the Hindu tradition is this regard. We propose to take up the discussion of this aspect of their thought when we outline their general metaphysical views in subsequent chapters. Our immediate aim is to discuss the Buddhist point of view.

III

The concept of dharma plays even a greater role in the Buddhist tradition than in the early part of Indian thought. As we know, Buddha was averse to abstruse metaphysical speculations, because he believed that reason alone should be the supreme

authority in the matter of deciding the framework of a truly good life. Shorn of all its metaphysical subtleties, the notion of dharma readily commended itself as the core and the content of this framework and promised to serve as the ultimate rational principle of explanation of the eternal moral order of the universe. It was against the background of this order that Buddha recommended the well-known discipline of the eight steps—to be referred to later. The two schools of Mahāyāna Buddhism—Mādhyamika and Vijñānavāda—subsequently discovered in this concept, the promise and potency of representing what could be the highest reality on the intellectual plane. This reality is called dharma-dhātu. In their explanation of this concept, the two absolutistic systems find themselves incredibly close to the early phase of the development of Hinduism sketched above.

In view of our prior discussion of its nature, it does not appear worthwhile to offer a detailed account of this concept. However, we reproduce below a passage[11] which clearly brings out the nature of this concept as it was understood in later Buddhism :

> The blessed Buddhas, of merits boundless and infinite, are born of dharma ; they dwell in dharma, are moulded by dharma ; they have dharma as their master, dharma as their light, dharma as their sphere of activity, dharma as their refuge...and all their joys here and hereafter are born of dharma and produced by dharma...Dharma is the same, the same for all beings—for low, middle or high dharma does not bother.

So must I make my thought like dharma.

Dharma is indifferent to the pleasant. Impartial is dharma.

So must I make my thought like dharma.

Dharma is independent of time. Timeless is dharma.

So must I make my thought like dharma.

Dharma is not above without being below.

Neither above nor below will Dharma bend.

So must I make my thought like dharma.

Dharma is not in something which is whole without being in that which is part. Bereft of superiority or inferiority is dharma.

So must I make my thought like dharma.

Dharma is not in the noble without being in the humble. No consideration for spheres of activity does dharma entertain.

So must I make my thought like dharma.

Dharma is not in the day without being in the night......Ever abiding is dharma.

So must I make my thought like dharma.

Dharma does not lack the capacity for adaptation. There is never delay in dharma.

So must I make my thought like dharma.

Dharma has neither shortage nor abundance.

Unfathomable, innumerable is dharma. Like space, it neither contracts nor expands.

So must I make my thought like dharma.

Dharma is not guarded by beings. Beings are guarded by dharma.

So must I make my thought like dharma.

> Dharma does not need refuge. The refuge of the whole universe is dharma.
> So must I make my thought like dharma.
> Dharma encounters none who can thwart it. Unthwartable is dharma.
> So must I make my thought like dharma.
> Dharma has no preferences. Devoid of preference is dharma.
> So must I make my thought like dharma.
> Dharma is without fears of birth and death, nor is it lured by nirvāṇa. Ever without misapprehensions is dharma.
> So must I make my thought like dharma.

What, then, we have to be reminded of here is the foct that, since dharma for the Hindus and the Mahāyāna Buddhists is the conceptual representation of the Absolute, all that claims to be has its being in it. It is what sustains, physical and non-physical. As such, it is at once immanent and transcendent, ideal and actual. Buddha, as we shall note in the next chapter, came to be identified with it.

It is interesting to refer here to the various interpretations offered of this concept by certain eminent scholars. Sogen remarks.

> Of the Sanskrit word dharma, as used in Buddhist philosophy, we might say the same thing which has been said of the latin equivalent '*res*', namely, that it is a blank cheque which has to be filled in accordance with the exigencies of the context. 'Dharma' means, in Buddhist Sanskrit, *law, rule, faith, religion, world, phenomena, thing, state*, etc.[12]

Mrs. Rhys Davids observes,

> Again, *dharma* is often translated, especially by men of Buddhistic countries, by 'law'. If by this is meant that inward monition which St. Paul called the 'law' (*nomos*), wherewith he fought his lower nature, the rendering is not amiss. But there is a tendency to read into it the newer idea of uniformity.[13]

Elsewhere she writes, 'It is the force of the Ought in this word that we must get in translating. We have it in 'duty', we have it in 'conscience'.[14] Stcherbatsky asks, 'What is dharma ?', and then proceeds to reply : "It is inconceivable ! No one will ever be able to tell what its real nature (dharma svabhāva) is ! It is transcendental !'[15] Thomas writes,

> All Indian religions are dominated by a single conception, which goes back to pre-Indian times. In both Vedic and Old Persian it is expressed by the same word meaning 'law'. It is the view that all things follow or ought to follow a certain course prescribed for them. This course is based upon the actual nature and constitution of the existing world.... From the later Vedic period we find this conception expressed as dharma covering every form of human activity.[16]

In the context of his discussion of the metaphysical significance of dharma in Buddhism, Raju observes,

> Dharma literally means that which holds the object. We may represent the Buddhist as

> maintaining that the Dharmakāya holds the universe by being its Ought. It is that towards which the whole universe should move. Yet it is not a mere ideal; it is its true nature. That is, it is its law even in the descriptive sense of the word, for it is the svabhāva or real nature of phenomena. Nay, we may say that it is the highest universal or sāmānya, not in the Platonic sense of a form apart from matter, or even distinct from matter, but as the truth of every form and matter. We find in the idea of the Dharmakāya the equation of the universal to the law and that again to the Ought....As law can mean both the universal and the Ought, the word dharma is used, in Buddhism, to denote classes of events as well as the Ought.[17]

All these observations are of little consequence so far as the correct interpretation of the concept of dharma is concerned. The most remarkable thing about them is that each of these lacks in one respect or other that clarity which we have endeavoured to discover in the notion of dharma in its characteristically metaphysical usage. The observation we have selected illustrate three different approaches to the notion of dharma : (1) Dharma is inconceivable, as maintained by Stcherbatsky ; (2) Dharma, not in the sense of a description of the behaviour of things, but as the source and sphere of the Ought, as suggested by Mrs. Rhys Davids; and (3) Dharma as 'both a natural law and an Ought' as held by Thomas and Raju. The first two interpretations militate against the basic spirit of the concept and are, therefore, unacceptable.

The last one comes fairly close to its true nature but fails to bring out its underlying metaphysical significance. Unless an attempt is made to offer a consistent and comprehensive account of the metaphysical connotation of this concept, interpretation is bound to remain vague. Our conviction is that no such attempt has been made. Perhaps the reason why this vagueness has persisted is the continually recurring assumption that the notion of dharma in its metaphysical sense is peculiar to Buddhism alone. That such an assumption is unfounded must be readily clear in view of what we have said in this chapter. We have yet to show how the various Indian systems—the Hindu as well as the Buddhist—work out the various implications of this notion and seek to account for concepts like God, soul, morality, etc.

IV

It should have now become fairly clear that dharma in Indian thought is the Absolute from the standpoint of conceptual determination. As against the reality of the Indeterminable, it is the concrete, positive reality—conceived as the unity of form and matter, of essence and being. This governing spirit is immanent in every aspect of the universe, and is the basis of all harmony, order and justice. In opposition to the Chārvāka explanation of the cosmic processes in terms of the blind mechanism of matter, the Indian conception is, therefore, thoroughly teleological. Everything flows of necessity from the nature of the whole. And since that whole is the universal, objective Spirit, everything has its place in an intelligible scheme. The entire universe is a

living body of which dharma is the soul, the governing intelligence, the sovereign law, the principle or form of eternal justice. Inasmuch as it is the expression of this intelligence, it is necessarily a perfect organism, immaculately ordered and teleological. A progressive deepening of insight served only to confirm the ancient Indians' belief that there was behind the uiverse a supreme wisdom, ceaselessly striving to manifest and actualize itself through diverse cosmic activities. It pulsates in each of these activities, and at the same time makes its power and presence felt in our spiritual being without, however, participating in our particular, contingent passions and impulses. It is here, then, that the two sides of reality—the outer and the inner— coincide. And if in the physical sphere it manifests itself as the form ever striving for actualization, in the spiritual sphere it presents itself as the ideal of realisation through knowledge and activity. Insofar as, therefore, it is the ultimate ground of our explanation of the events and phenomena of this concrete organism, it is the immanent principle (apara). But insofar as it abides in its own being and essence as the objective, universal law of Spirit—the Logos, as the Greeks called it—it is transcendent (para). All that happens, in any way and under any condition whatever, has in it the necessity of rational determination. The universe exists as the whole of finite spirits and material objects, but the ground of their unity and the reason for their existence lies beyond the spheres of both.

It should not be difficult for us now to see how the Indians contrived to lay down the foundation for an idealistic tradition. It is in this idealism

that we can discover the underlying unity and continuity of Indian thought as a whole. The enunciation of so thorougly idealistic a viewpoint clearly demonstrates the highly metaphysical temper of thinkers of so early an age as the Vedic. This idealisitic tradition was sought to be enriched by the various systems, both orthodox and heterodox, in the light of their own reasonings and conclusions. Each viewpoint, however, had its own logic. This imparted dynamism to Indian thought and gave it the strength and inspiration to save itself from stagnation. All this remains, however, to be judged from what follows in the rest of the chapters.

Notes

1. RV., x. 90. *Purusha evedam sarvam yad bhūtamyachcha bhāvyam.*
2. RV., IV.x. 5.
3. RV., X. xxi. 1.
4. I.xxiv. 8.
5. IV. xxiii. 9.
6. II.xxviii. 3; VIII.xviii. 15.
7. III.x.5. *Ahaṁ asmi prathamajā rita'asya pūrvaṁ devebhyo amritasya nābhā'i.*
8. II.ii. 4.
9. I.iv. 14. *Dharmād param nāsti.*
10. vi.13.27.12.*Ritam satyam param brahma.*
11. *Dharmasangīti-Sūtra*, Shikshasamuchchaya, pp. 322-3.
12. Yamakami Sogen, *Systems of Buddhist Thought*, pp. 113-14.
13. *Sakya or Buddhist Origins*, p. 169.
14. *Gradual Sayings*, Vol. I, p.viii.
15. *The Central Conception of Buddhism*, p. 75.
16. E.J. Thomas, *The Life of Buddha*, p. 173.
17. *Idealistic Thought of India*, pp. 285-6.

Chapter IV

THE ETHICS OF DHARMA

We may pause here for a while and take stock of the various attempts made by the various Indian systems to explain or interpret the world of ordinary experience. Sense-experience acquainted them with the world of a bewildering variety of objects. As we have noted, there are two different explanations offered of the origin of the world : either in terms of an ultimate spiritual cause or in terms of certain ultimate material elements, the belief in both cases being that the world in its manifest form is not its own reality. Only a penetrating insight could have led them to carve out of an indefinite, implicit, ultimate cause a definite, manifest world of objects with all its parts carefully examined and explained in terms of an intricately woven network of concepts, such as substance, quality, relation, activity, etc. Every system has its own plan and its own material and produces its own model. No aspect of it escapes receiving finishing touches, each system vying with others in producing the best possible design. Man, in a certain respect, is part of it and is as such explicable in terms of certain concepts, such as 'freedom', 'morality', 'activity', etc.

Such a world cannot, however, account for certain facts which even the unreflective seem in some measure to be aware of. The world is not self and vice versa. Every one is instinctively convinced that he is not any of the things of the

physical world. And this is the conclusion which all the Indian philosophers arrive at : the self and the not-self are exclusive of each other, and do not admit of being reduced to each other. If, then the entire realm of Being is to be salvaged from lapsing into a stark dualism of prakriti and purusha some ground for effecting a *rapprochement* has to be found. This is the meeting-point of all the Indian systems. The compromise is believed to be possible if, and only if, prakriti and purusha meet each other half-way. Prakriti comes forward with activity (karma) as in some way paving the ground for a possible compromise, and purusha with what may be called the principle of absolute determination (dharma). Thus, whereas karma is the matter, dharma is the form of human life. A truly human action must have both form and matter. And this means that neither the physical universe by itself nor the self as only dharma can be self-explanatory. The world of concrete experience is a synthesis of the spititual and the material. Both the sides must be represented in all experience and activity, if reality is to be a meaningful concept. In other words, both must suffer 'reduction' : the self, when reduced, yields the notion of dharma ; while the not-self, when reduced, manifests itself as karma ; and both karma and dharma become complementary to each other. It is on this assumption that the various Indian systems account for the ultimate unity of matter and spirit, and it is on this very assumption that they believe man to be capable of moral activity. The *Gītā's* karma-yoga outlined in the preceding chapter is based on this assumption.

What needs to be pointed out here, however, is the fact that, since karma and dharma are only the modes, respectively, of prakriti and purusha arising in the wake of their reduction, they cannot be conceived of as intrinsic to the nature of their respective sources. Thus, karma is an attribute of prakriti only in the state of its actual manifestation as the ground of multiplicity of objects, and dharma that of the purusha in the state of its embodiment. There is no karma when prakriti attains to its original homogeneity in pralaya and, likewise, there is no dharma when the self attains its pristine state. This explains why dharma is spoken of only as an empirical quality or attribute of the self, showing that the self is as much subject to determination by prakriti as by its own law. However, certain other systems identify dharma with the very nature of self and on the conceptual plane take it to be the highest conceivable reality in much the same way as it is taken to be the essential nature of God.

Nevertheless, all the Indian systems are agreed that dharma, insofar as it is expressive of the universal spirit, is unconditionally and categorically binding on all human beings. From the subjective side it is the principle of determination valid for all rational beings ; from the objective side it is activity whose worth is not to be judged in terms of its results, agreeable or disagreeable. In their treatment of it the different systems have laid emphasis on one or both of these aspects. While on the subjective side, we have only a bare form of an unconditional law, on the objective side we have in its actual application in the different spheres of

human activity an apparent multiplicity of obligatory deeds or virtues (dharma) Thus, any activity is a dharma if it is grounded in the law of the spirit. And this obviously means that there are as many kinds of virtues as there are spheres of application of this law. It should now be our endeavour to trace out the development of this concept and see how the Indians sought to apply it in different spheres of human conduct, so as to show that, like the physical world, the moral universe, too, has its own law, whereby man can be said to be capable of a higher mode of activity and experience.

I

One of the distinguishing marks of the early Hindu texts consists in the attempt to show that the moral law as characteristic of an absolutely rational self manifests itself as the categorical imperative when conceived as binding on a self under human limitations. This means that, whereas an absolutely holy will would necessarily act from sheer love of goodness, a self under human limitations ought so to act as to be the source of moral determination. The moral law is for the human will a command that enjoins unconditional obedience of it. Thus, if from the metaphysical standpoint the moral law is the law of reality, from the ethical standpoint it is the command which is unconditionally binding on a *human* will. In both cases, however, the same term 'dharma' has been used by the Indians. The underlying assumption here is that nothing short of an absolute, immutable, objective principle like dharma can be the ground of determination of both the divine and the human volition. When once it has

been allowed to determine the will, there remains for the latter no liberty to choose the opposite.

The Vedic Indians were the first to initiate this line of reasoning and lay down the foundation for a truly metaphysical basis of ethics. We shall recall here how they sought to idealize rita to the supreme metaphysical status, as the law governing the entire universe with its inviolable authority. In relation to the human will it is the moral command that has to be observed unconditionally. Man as a spiritual being cannot disown his commitment to honour it[1]. The very thought of it is believed to dispel from the mind all evil propensities and eradicate all sin[2]. When once the will has been subjected to its determination there comes about a state of adjustment of the inner and the outer aspects of Being. The result is a peaceful, happy life. 'The winds blow sweet and the rivers flow sweet for the man who observes rita'[3]. What is believed to be significant from the strictly moral point of view is the spirit behind the deed rather than its consequences. Knowledge of truth follows the pursuit of rita. 'He who makes rita the guiding principle of his life and ever seeks rita, his power instantly makes him the gainer of knowledge'[4]. Only those who follow the path of rita in all sincere ways become duly qualified for divine grace and felicity[5]. The Vedic Indians undertook to perform various kinds of rites and sacrifices (dharmas)[6]. They were supposed to purify the mind and ensure a better life in terms of material prosperity and happiness.

Rita as the unconditional law of duty and anrita as the negation of it correspond. respectively,

to the dharma and adharma of the later periods. The formcr is the guiding spirit of a large number of virtues, such as honesty, rectitude, fellow-feeling charity, non-violence, truthfulness, restraint, revrential faith and austerity[7]. The latter is expressed in vices, like malice, falsehood, imprecation, calumniation, back-biting, dishonesty, sorcery, gambling, debt, egostic enjoyment, wantonness, adultery, theft and injury to life.[8] At times gods, as embodiments of ṛita, are supposed to be the authority behind all moral commands. But it is conscience and reason that seem to have an upper hand in deciding what is good and what is bad.[9] Certain gods are believed to be endowed with the capability of assessing merits of thoughts, speeches or deeds from within the individual's mind[10]—a view that may have shaped the subsequent conception of God as karmādhyaksha.

These broad ethical outlines as set forth in the *Rig-Veda* were sufficient to determine the course and the pattern of subsequent Hindu thought and practice. The Upanishads discovered in these outlines a ready-made framework into which all their ethical thought could be suitably fitted. But for all that, they did not accept the Vedic position in its entirety. The gods as the source of moral obligation behind ṛita come to be relegated to the background, and the self instead becomes the ultimate ground as well as the authority of all moral obligation. So, the self is both dharma and adharma,[11] and therefore liable to determination both by itself and by the not-self. 'According as one acts, according as one behaves, so does one become. The doer of good becomes good and the doer of evil becomes evil.

One becomes virtuous by virtuous action, bad by bad action'. Dharma on the objective side signifies the virtues which the *Chhāndogya Upanishad*[12] enumerates as austerity, uprightness, charity, non-violence and truthfulness. The *Taittirīya Upanishad*[13] speaks of truthfulness, austerity, restraint, and self-possession as some of the main virtues of a good life. Opposed to dharma is adhrma, the source of which lies in the individual's desire for sensuous pleasure. This is looked upon as contrary to his spiritual aim and achievement. 'Different is the good (shreyasa), and different indeed is the pleasant (preyasa). Between them they determine a man. Of these two it is well for a man if he chooses the good, but he who chooses the pleasant falls far away from his aim. The wise man reflects and discriminates. He chooses the good in preference to the pleasant. The ignorant prefer the pleasant for worldy benefits'[14]. All pleasures are transient and soon wear out[15]. Thus, when Maitreyī asked Yājñavalkya, 'My lord, if this whole earth, full of wealth, were mine, do I become immortal thereby?', she received the answer : 'like the life of the rich so would your life be' : then, 'of immortality, however, there is no hope'[16]. A life of pleasure can never be the *summum bonum*.

In order to bring out clearly how the early Hindus strove to extend the sphere of the operation of dharma and derive therefrom certain universal and objective duties, it is necessary to refer here to two institutions called varṇa and āshrama. The former is based on the consideration of specialization of functions and division of labour as conducive to the growth of a dynamic and efficient society ; the latter, on the other hand, had its inception in

the plan to ensure an effective, enduring rapport between the material and the spiritual needs of the individual so as to gradually prepare him for a spiritual way of life. Both the institutions had their respective obligations. Only a brief discussion will be attempted here.

(1) Varṇa-dharma. With the two-fold purpose in view—specialization of function and division of labour—the early Hindu society came to be divided into four distinct groups: brāhmaṇa, kshatriya, vaishya and shūdra. Each group was conceived as invested with specific obligations. As the *Mahābhārata* says, the whole world was originally of one class, but came to be later divided into four groups on account of the specific functions.[17] A clear reference to these funtions is available in the purusha-sūkta of the *Rig-Veda*.[18] It is stated there that the four-fold division came into existence as a result of the sacrifice undergone by the cosmic purusha. From his mouth came the brāhmaṇa. Accordingly, his main function was to chant the Vedic hymns, study all religious texts and officiate at all religious functions. He was expected to cultivate virtues such as truthfulness, self-restraint, austerity, charity, courage, forbearance, performance of sacrificial duties, etc. Then, from the arms of the cosmic purusha came the kshatriya who was charged with maintaining law and order, protecting people against foreign aggression, studying religious texts, giving charity and help to the needy and abstaining from a luxurious mode of living. 'Heroism, vigour, steadiness, resourcefulness, not fleeing from the battlefield, generosity and leadership are the duties born of the nature of an

kshatriya'[19]. Then, from the thigh of the cosmic purusha arose the vaishya whose main obligations were animal husbandry, trade and commerce, agriculture, study of religious texts, charity, etc. And, lastly, from the feet of the cosmic purusha arose the shūdra who was expected to serve the other three classes. This four-fold classification is ascribed to divine origin, and is based on worth and work rather than on birth.[20] However, its original aim and appeal having been lost sight of in course of time, birth became the main consideration. It developed the rigidity of the present caste system. The four functional classes became the four main castes. It was the shūdra who suffered most. He became the low caste and an untouchable. Thus, a sound social structure became the source of division of people into castes and sub-castes, each with its own ethos, outlook and taboos. It is heartening to note, however, that this rigidity of the Indian social life is fast crumbling. This was the primary target of attack at the hands of certain contemporary social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Swami Dayanand, Mahatma Gandhi and others. People have realized the irrationality of this out-moded institution and it is now dying out slowly The sooner it goes the better.

(2) Āshrama-dharma. With the explicit aim of preparing the individual for the effective discharge of various obligations both towards himself and his society, the early Hindus devised a four-fold scheme of life. These are : brahmacharya, which enjoins study of religious texts, performance of yajñas, abstinence from sense-enjoyment, faithfully serving the teacher and observing certain vows;

grihastha, which included the sincere observance of all the duties of a house-holder, leading a happy and contented married life, extending charity and due hospitality to all; vānaprastha, which required performance of five great yajñas—as a token of love and affection towards the gods, of gratitude to the saints and seers of the past and the present for showing others the path of peace and progress, of respect and remembrance towards the deceased ancestors, of seeking the welfare of all human beings, and, lastly, of all beings; and, finally saṁnyāsa, which expected all spiritual aspirants to lead a life of complete austerity, detachment, calm meditation, etc.

The underlying idea here is that every one ought to recognise his station in society and must discharge all the duties that pertain to it. Mere pursuit of knowledge of the self is not going to be of much avail, unless it is accompanied by the performance of duties of the stage of life to which each of us belongs.[21] Every individual, we are told, is born with a particulr station in his society. Of necessity, then certain duties devolve upon us the performance of which is inextricably bound up with the attainment of perfection. We have not to learn from others what these duties are. We know what these duties are, and yet have not the requisite power of moral determination. What we are expected to do is to cultivate this power. 'Through one's own self alone one gets this power'. In other words, the power of moral determination (dharma) must proceed *pari passu* with the power of moral appreciation (jñana). What the Upanishads emphasize here is the fact that, though the self has

to meet the opposition of the not-self and may at times succumb to its influence, yet it has a nisus of its own, and can grow in its power of moral determination if efforts are made in the right direction. We may recall here what we have said elsewhere—that the self, according to the Upanishads, is in essence the moral law (dharma) and therefore the basis of all moral efforts. The various duties that relate to one's station in society are but the expression of this universal law. It is, then, wrong to suggest that the ethical content of the Upanishads is 'negligible and valueless'.[22]

Our treatment of the ethical thought of the *Gītā* need not detain us for long, because we have outlined it in the preceding chapter. Nevertheless, we may, by way of a comparative approach, point out here that there are in the Upanishads two apparently distinct and mutually incompatible strands of thought. The one, as noted above, is the principle of active determination as the condition of all ethical activity, and the other, what is called the discipline of renunciation (saṁnyāsa-yoga).[23] The *Gītā* saw in these two loose elements the promise and possibility of a secure foundation for a truly spiritual discipline. A synthesis of these is the basis of Karma-yoga. What is to be renounced is the fruit of action, not action itself, for apart from action there remains no ground for the exercise of the power of moral determination.

Moral goodness, then, pertains not to the actions and their results, but only to the power of self-determination in respect of which man can claim to be truly autonomous. In other words, all actions, according to the *Gītā*, can claim to be

representative of man if, and only if, they are expressive of, grounded in, and determined by, the self's own dharma. What has to be guarded against, however, is the possibility of the self's being overcome by the heteronomy of the natural self (paradharma). So, says the *Gītā*, 'Better is one's own dharma, though imperfectly carried out, than paradharma carried out perfectly. Better is one's death in the discharge of one's dharma, for to succumb to paradharma is fraught with danger'[24]. The self can be regarded as a moral agent only if the action issues from it alone. 'He who adheres to dharma reaps wordly benefits also, but even if he does not, it matters little, for observance of dharma itself is the supreme aim'[25]. 'Although pleasure and pain are transient', says the *Mahābhārata*, 'dharma is eternal. Therefore, one should not abjure dharma, whether for desire of pleasure, out of fear, avarice, or even if life itself is in danger. Life is essentially eternal and its objects, such as pleasure and pain, are transient'[26]. We cannot understand the true meaning and significance of dharma so long as we continue to be attached to the various sensuous carvings in the fond hope that their satisfaction is our good. The resultant bondage is the gravest fear. But, as the *Gītā* says, 'even a little that we may do to carry out our dharma saves us from a great fear'[27]. When once we have allowed our will to be subjected to dharma we understand not only the depth of our fall but also the height of our ascent. All that appeals then as our good is the observance of dharma and all that we do is only what is enjoined by it. When Draupadī questions the wisdom of her husband in following

dharma in spite of the numerous hardships it caused, his only answer was that he did so not because of the expectation of recompense, but because his will had become irresistibly estblished in it.[28] Since the ultimate truth we can so conceive of is dharma itself, man must make it the governing passion of his life if he wants to realize it in its fullness. Thus, in the observance of dharma we have not to squeeze out every motive from our mind, since dharma is itself the moral motive and also the good which alone is consistent with our spiritual nature. This is sometimes called nishkāma-karma, but insofar as it is negative in character, it came to be replaced by the positive notion of dharma. But there should be not room for any misunderstanding here, for dharma is what the self wills in enforcing its law through action.[29]

II

For the Jainas right conduct (Saṁyag-cāritra), right faith (samyagdarshana) and right knowledge (saṁyag-jñāna) constitute the three precious jewels (tri-ratna) of the spiritual life. Since there is no God as the object of devotion and source of grace or mercy, all responsibility for bondage and release comes to rest squarely on the jīva himself. The system is critical of the Hindu view of self as a mere passive onlooker, and believes instead that the self is a real agent (kartā). All moral efforts, it is contended, lose their meaning if the hypothesis of the passivity of self is allowed to stand.[30] The test of a strictly moral life here is the autonomy of the jīva as expressed in the determination of activity. 'The jīva, which is free from relation to others and from

alien thoughts, through its own intrinsic nature of insight and understanding, perceives and knows its eternal selfhood and is said to be expressed in conduct that is absolutely self-determined'[31]. Conversely, heteronomy of the self is looked upon as unworthy of moral life. 'The jīva which through desire for outer things experiences pleasurable or painful states loses his hold on himself and gets bewildered and led by outer things. He becomes determined by the other'[32]. The danger to the self's autonomy comes from delusion caused by the inflow of karmic matter (karma-pudgala) into the outer crust of its being. When conditioned by karma-influences it experiences the fruits of its deeds and gets bewildered in the realm of good and evil (saṁsāra).[33] Since, however, dharma transcends all the narrow claims of the egoistic personality, it alone can be the object of deep attachment and thus the spring of happiness.[34]

Right conduct consists in refraining from what is harmful and doing what is beneficial.[35] The following are its chief constituents :

(1) Every Jaina is enjoined to observe what are called the five great vows (pañcha-mahāvratas). Ahiṁsā or respect for life finds an important place in this list. We have already noted that Jainism regards life as existent in everything in the world and deserves respect wherever it is found. The Jaina monks walk bare-footed and with their mouths covered with a white piece of cloth so as to avoid causing any injury to living beings while walking or inhaling. 'Thus say all the perfect souls and liberated ones, whether past, present or to come—

thus they speak, thus they declare, thus they proclaim : all things breathing, all things existing, all things living, all beings whatever, should not be slain, or subjected to violence, insulted, or tortured, or driven away. This is the dharma which the wise who know the world have proclaimed'[36]. "Never entertain the misconception that dharma flourishes through the gods and that therefore everything is to be offered to them. Do not kill beings under perverted judgment".[37] The other vows are satya or truthfulness, asteya or respect for others' property and possessions, brahmacharya or abstience from sex indulgence, and aparigraha or non-attachment.

(2) Proper care (samiti) is enjoined to be taken in matters of daily concern. Things really important from the spiritual point of view are sometimes lightly taken. Jainism holds that it is the spirit of seriousness and sincerity that counts more than anything else in day-to-day behaviour. Unless we start cultivating what appear to be trivial habits or dispositions, we cannot build up healthy attitudes. Austerity is one of the basic tenets of the Jaina faith and it can be cultivated only if the individual starts taking things seriously right from the start of his moral life. It is from things apparently trivial that larger pursuits emerge.

(3) Proper restraint (gupti) is recommended as necessary for bringing the various instinctive and emotional dispositions under the yoke of the self. Even speech and bodily movements need to be properly disciplined. Much hiṁsā to living beings can be avoided by exercising restraint over one's behaviour.

(4) All are enjoined to practise ten different forms of dharma, namely, forgiveness, humility, straight-forwardness, purity, truthfulness, self-control, austerity, celibacy, charity and detachment.

(5) Every Jaina is expected to meditate upon the truths concerning the self and the world. Right faith can come about only when the individual has been convinced about the ultimate truth. Moral efforts will follow of themselves.

(6) All distractions of mind and body are to be overcome. Even the ordinary needs of the body, such as hunger and thirst, have to be resisted. They cannot be completely conquered, but can certainly be disciplined to some extent. Austerity requires the abandoning of all apathy and indifference, and the individual must get used to hardships and difficulties.

(7) And, lastly, one must ceaselessly strive to attain equanimity towards all living beings, purity of mind and body, self-sufficiency and good conduct[38].

All the three ingredients of ethical discipline must combine to bring about the state of perfection. Certain systems emphasize one or other of these ingredients which, in the eyes of the Jaina, amounts to a partial description of the path to perfection. The analogy of a sick patient is given to emphasize the necessity of the three constituents. In order to be cured, a patient, it is pointed out, must possess full faith in the ability of the doctor to cure him fully, clearly understand the disease he is suffering from and the nature of the medicine prescribed for

him, and, lastly, take the medicine according to his physician's instructions. The three elements—right faith, right knowledge and right conduct—must go together in order to ensure full success. The Jaina ethical code does not recognize the Hindu institution of āshrama or of varṇa. All men are entitled to be either householders or ascetics, depending upon their capacity and taste. The ethical code outlined above is believed to be comprehensive enough to embrace within its fold people of varied capacity and taste.

The ethical code of Buddhism is more pragmatic and less ascetic than that of Jainism. In his Sermon known as the 'Discourse on setting in motion the wheel of the Doctrine' (Dhammachakkappavattana Sutta) Buddha emphatically declared that those who wish to lead a life of harmony and peace should avoid the two extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification. The one is low, vulgar, ignoble and harmful, the other destructive of all poise and peace. Buddha had a foretaste of both these extremes and could point out the pitfalls of both—the one when he was a prince in his father's palace before he renounced the world, the other when he was ascetic in the Uruvelā forest prior to his enlightenment. What he suggested instead was self-conquest through moderation which alone in his view could lead to the ultimate goal—nirvāṇa.

The 'middle way' which Buddha advocated consisted of eight steps, and has, accordingly, been called the Noble Eight-fold Path (āshṭāñgika-mārga). These eight steps are :

(1) Right Understanding (sammā-ditthi). All our preparation for nirvāṇa must begin with the effort to see life in its true perspective and to understand its relation to those factors to which it is directly or indirectly related, namely. impermanence (anichcha), suffering (dukkha) and no-soul (anatta), the moral law, the various elements that constitute saṁsāra, etc. While ignorance is the cause of all suffering, knowledge alone is competent to bring about its cessation.

(2) Right Resolve (sammā-saṅkappa). We must render our minds free from all cravings (rāga), ill-will (vyāpāda), violence, (vihiṁsā), etc. All worldly pursuits and possessions need to be renounced to keep the mind pure.

(3) Right Speech (sammā-vācā). By refraining from lying (musāvādā), back-biting (pisunā-vācā), harsh words (pharusāvācā), and idle talk (samphappalāpā) we can ensure purity of mind. We do indulge in violence as much through words as through deeds.

(4) Right Activity (sammā-kammanta). This discipline consists in observing the Five Precepts which may be stated both in negative and positive terms (i) Not to kill, but to treat all with love and affection ; (ii) Not to take anything for ourselves but to give the needy all that they require ; (iii) Not to indulge in sex-enjoyment, but to practise purity and self-control ; (iv) Not to indulge in false speech, but to be truthful and honest ; and (v) Not to take intoxicating drinks or drugs, but to practise restraint or temperance.

(5) Right Livelihood (sammā-ājīva). This enjoins upon us the desirability of earning a livelihood bythe 'sweat of the brow' and not to be parasitical. A life of complete self-reliance is a virtue and must be practised.

(6) Right Effort (sammā-vāyāma). It aims at getting rid of all evil dispositions and at acquiring noble qualities. The discipline consists of four steps. (i) the effort to prevent all those evil dispositions to which man is subject ; (ii) the effort to eradicate all evil dispositions which are already active ; (iii) the effort to acquire all good dispositions which have not yet been acquired ; and (iv) the effort to cultivate all good dispositions which are potentially present in all, and can be harnessed for moral progress.

(7) Right Mindfulness (sammā-sati). We must be on our guard against all evil that might infect the body, feelings, mind and thought, and learn to discriminate things in their true nature, function property, etc. All erroneous views must be got rid of, and none of them should find entry into the mind. A deep awarness of ourselves (vipassnā) can come about when we are constantly vigilant against all evil thought and deed.

(8) Right Concentration (sammā-samādhi). This discipline comprises four successive stages marking progressive realization of the final goal. In the first stage there is the joy and ease born of detachment and pure thought ; in the second there is the spontaneous outburst of tranquility born of the depth of calm contemplation ; in the third there is a sense of equanimity towards all mental and

bodily pleasures and pains ; while in the last stage the spiritual aspirant finds himself possessed of the ecstasy of self-possession.

Dharma for Buddha is the highest conceivable truth and, therefore, the highest virtue to be unfailingly practised. What is of immediate concern to man is virtuous conduct, and there is no room for laxity and indifference. 'Arouse yourself, do not be thoughtless. Follow the law of virtue. He who practises virtue lives happily in this world as well as in the world beyond'.[39] Knowledge (prajñā) and virtue (shīla) are inextricably bound up with each another. Even the four noble truths—viz., there is suffering, there is the cause of suffering and there is way to cessation of suffering—can be grasped in their true import only when one has sought refuge in dharma.[40] The good man is a guardian of dharma when he presents himself as a model for others.[41] Non-violence, patience, freedom from cravings, restraint over senses and mind, moral courage, wisdom, etc., are all virtues that are recognized as indispensable to one's elevation to the status of Budhahood.

The Buddhist ethical discipline stresses the role of three distinct elements, namely, shīla, samādhi and prajñā. The pāramitā doctrine of the Mahāyāna elaborated it to serve as the basis of a universal religion of compassion (karuṇā). Six important pāramitās (perfections) are worthy of note here, namely, dāna (gifting away), shīla (virtuous conduct), kshsānti (forbearance), vīrya (energy, courage), dhyāna (meditation) and prajñā (wisdom). All these perfections are said to be sublime, dis-

interested, supremely important and eternal, and lead to welfare, happy rebirths, unremitting spiritual cultivation, successful concentration and the highest knowledge. They are immune from contamination by sensuous enjoyment, hope for recompense, attachment, etc. These perfections may be briefly outlined here.

(1) Dāna here, as in the early Hindu texts, means the gifting amay of all that one has for the welfare of other beings. Whereas a Hīnayānist is concerned with the accumulation of merit (puṇya) for his own spiritual development, the bodhisattva of the Mahāyāna sect seeks to transfer even his own merits for the welfare of all (pariṇāmanā). Love and wisdom are the springs of the conduct of a badhisattva, who works indefatigably for the good of all sentient beings.

> Therefore, all bodhisattvas, in order to emancipate sentient beings from misery, are inspired with great spiritual energy and mingle themselves in the filth of birth and death. Though thus they make themselves subject to the laws of birth and death, their hearts are free from sins and attachment. They are like unto those immaculate, undefiled lotus-flowers which grow out of mire, yet are not contaminated by it.[42]

By getting ever ready to exchange his own merits for the demerits of others, the bodhisattva is keen to bring about redemption even of the whole universe of sentient beings. Unless he has developed such an altruistic, universal outlook he cannot be said to have freed himself from his ego and is not fit for the highest goal.

(2) Shīla is the basis of all right conduct which is defined as the negation of all passions and cravings. There are three basic kinds of these cravings—rāga, dvesha and moha. These are the roots of all sorrow and suffering (akushala-mūlam) and perpetuate the cycle of birth and death in saṁsāra. Rāga is the ground for the existence of lust, passion, attachment, covetousness, longing, fondness, affection, appetite for wealth, children, wife, craving for sensual pleasures, and so on. The conquest of rāga is the true essence of righteousness.[43] Lack of knowledge of the four noble truths and the eight-fold path is the result of moha or delusion.

Positively, right conduct embraces within it a wide range of virtues, such as generosity, compassion, self-control, forbearance. fortitude, humility, modesty, conscientiousness, politeness and purity. Shīla is sometimes spoken of as comprising the three main sources of activity, namely, body (kāya), speech (vāch) and thought (manas). Dharma consists in exercising proper control over these three aspects of life (chittādhīno dharma, dharmādhīnabodh). It is also identified with what are called the ten forms of activity (karma-pathaḥ) : abstention from violence, theft, sensual pleasures, lying, slander, unkind speech, frivolous and senseless talk, covetousness, malevolence and wrong views.[44]

(3) Kshānti is freedon from anger and excitement (akopanā, akshobhanatā) and the courage to endure all hardships and pardon the faults of others (par-āpakārasya marṣaṇam). It is not so much from concern with the moral struggles of others as

from his identification with the sorrows and sufferings of others that the bodhisattva derives the strength of his conviction and the inspiration to go forth on the path of universal redemption. He cannot hope to enter into heaven while leaving all others to suffer on earth. Patient endurance of pain aad dedication to the ideals and doctrines of one's dharma are regarded as the important ingredients of this pāramitā.

(4) Vīrya as a pāramitā has been translated as 'strength', 'energy', 'zeal', 'courage', 'power', 'vigour', etc. This perfection stands in sharp contrast to the mere intellectual understanding of truth which is of little avail unless accompanied by the power of self-determination. The goal of enlightenment is possible of attainment only by the brave, both mentally and physically. The example of Buddha flashes across the mind while discussing the nature of this perfection. He continued his march towards the goal despite the heavy odds. It is sometimes distinguished as the valour of quick decision (sannāha-vīryam), and the valour of follow-up action (prayoga-vīryam). Indecision and inertia haunt only the weak or confused mind. The power of moral determination must follow the power of moral appreciation if the spiritual aspirant is really keen to attain his goal.

(5) Dhyāna is defined as the power of concentration and the stability of mind (chitta-aikāgrayam citta-sthitiḥ). To become an introvert only a small effort is required. So long as the mind remains mobile, wandering from one object to another, contemplating satisfaction of one desire after another,

there can be no possibility of fixing it on the nature of the true object of pursuit. The discipline of renunciation and solitude is recommended as the prerequisite to self-mastery and self-recollection.

(6) Prajñā marks the consummation of all moral strivings in the state of enlightenment and, therefore, represents the highest stage in the scale of perfection. In the Mahāyāna texts prajñā as a pāramitā is extolled as the highest that man can possibly conceive of and attain to. It is sometimes characterized as the mother of all the buddhas and the bodhisattvas. The adjectives used in praise of its uniqueness do not easily yield to understanding. The state of enlightenment it leads to is couched in mystic terms. It represents the stage beyond which nothing is conceptually determinable : 'There is no dharma which is not produced by causes and conditions. Therefore, no dharma exists which can be called free from phenomenal characteristics[45].

The intervening period when the spiritual aspirant undertakes the strenuous path of enlightenment and when he actually attains this state has been divided into several stages. He starts on his long, arduous journey and continues to march from one stage to another till he succeeds in attaining it. These stages are called bhūmis. The Mahāyānists conceived of seven basic stages through which the spiritual pilgrim has to pass. Only a brief description of each of these will be attempted here.

(1) Durārohā. The initial stage is difficult to embark upon. It requires a radical break with one's natural attitude and outlook, and embark upon

a path which is full of strifes and struggles, trials and tribulations. It means giving up the delights of life and its allurements, and thus cannot be embarked upon by the timid, sentimental, weak-willed and conceited. All the requisite powers, mental and physical, must be cultivated. Belief in the unreality of all worldly pursuits and pleasures is one of the basic requirements of this stage. A complete conviction in the impermanence of things and in the sure success of the mission is essential.

(2) Baddhamānā. The spiritual aspirant must throw off the yoke of all forms of bondage and throw himself heart and soul into the success of his goal. Accordingly, he has to be resolute, pure, dedicated and self-sufficient. Nothing can be gained by him in his pursuit if he cannot control his ego. So he has to be cautious against all the temptations and claims to which in such conditions one is ordinarily susceptible. He must exercise proper restraint over his thought, speech and volition, and ensure that all that he does tends to bring him nearer the cherished goal.

(3) Pushpa-maṇḍitā. At this stage the spiritual aspirant is irresistibly motivated by the desire to spread happiness wherever he goes and in whatever he does. All living beings are his friends and he is the friend of all. There is in all his deeds the clear manifestation of the spirit of sacrifice (tyāga), since there is nothing that is dear to him and nothing that repulses him. Love of learning is the most intense of all spiritual passions. Each single moment of his life draws him closer and closer to his goal. So he cannot rest content with his past

achievements.

(4) Ruchirā. Various objects tend to charm the mind of the ordinary man and a bodhisattva is not immune unless he is vigilant. Even the powers which he progressively attains begin to charm him and there is every possibility of his developing attachment to them. So he has to transcend this stage cautiously, as he has already transcended the three preceding ones.

(5) Chitta-vistāra. This is the stage of development of disinterested motivation and of the conviction that all that exists here and now cannot give the truth. This serves to widen the mental horizon and enables him to understand his path ahead more clearly. Even the most ascetic practices cannot frighten him.

(6) Rūpavatī. The ascetic now is completely disillusioned about the apparent charms and attractions of the world, and cultivates an attitude of equanimity. Whether what he hears about him is praise or blame, it cannot move him. He precives everything in the light of the necessity that reigns supreme all around him.

(7) Durjayā. The ideal of enlightenment is difficult to attain, but the greatness of the bodhisattva lies in conquering all difficulties and attaining the goal. His actions must embody the ideal of goodness and his intellect must reflect a full grasp of the various arts, sciences and languages. When there is coordination between knowledge and action, there is a sense of ease and relaxation in the mind of the spiritual pilgrim. He finds the path easier than it had appeared. Compassion and love for all

creatures characterize his attitude and activity. He is now the saint with all perfections. In having disowned all that is wordly, he has owned the entire universe. He is indefatigably active for the welfare of all beings, prepared to sacrifice anything for their happiness.

It is now clear that Buddhism as a whole lays great stress on the cultivation of universal values and virtues, such that both intellect and will keep pace together. The various virtues—dāna, shīla, kshānti, vīrya, dhyāna and prajñā—have behind them the urge of a universal spirit which is looked upon not so much an object of philosophic discussion as one of direct realization. Hence the emphasis on the need for moral development.

III

We have already noted that for the Nyāya-Vaisheshikas dharma is a quality of the self as implicated in saṁsāra. Adharma is just the opposite of dharma and is also the quality of self in its embodied existence. This means that the self is as much subject to determination by dharma as by adharma. What is specially worthy of notice here, however, is the fact that, as already pointed out, whereas dharma is an eternal and essential characteristic of the Divine Will, in the case of the human will it is only an accidental quality. Since the Veda is regarded as the expression of the Divine Will, all Vedic commands are dharmas and are unconditionally binding on the human will.[46] And it is in this sense that dharma is often conceived as manifested by God.[47] The moral law of God presents itself as the moral imperative to a self under subjective limitations.

Here we encounter the distinction between niyoga and vidhi which, to all intents and purposes, corresponds to the distinction Kant makes between the moral law and the categorical imperative. The recurring sense of inner conflict and constraint (ātmakūta) presents the moral law before the self as self-authoritative. But, whether the will (kriti) is determined by dharma or by adharma, will have to be judged by consideration of what the agent understands by the good (ishṭa). In the former case, it is the desire for transcending all the sorrows and sufferings of saṁsāra that is good, while in the latter case the good is taken to consist in the enjoyment of the fruits of the actions performed (phalechchhā). Dharmas are either those that commonly belong to all human beings, or those that pertain to castes and different stages of life. The dharmas of universal import are benevolence, truthfulness, freedom from attachments and aversions, purity of intention, absence of anger, devotion to God, faith in the moral law, fasting, dutifulness, etc.[48] Adharma results from actions prohibited by the scriptures and are thus contrary to dharma. The various adharmas are malice, untruthfulness, unrestrained indulgence, neglect of duties that are enjoined by the scriptures, etc.[49] However, whether the self determines the will by means of its dharma or whether the will is determined by adharma, both are characteristic of the life of bondage in saṁsāra (saṁsāramūlakāraṇyor dharmādharamayor).

Since dharma is motivated by the desire for the good, an action that tends to ensure the good is dharma. There is dharma if the action is conducive to liberation. But such actions have to be completely

disinterested (nishkāma). Here the motive-force is the self's own dharma. Then there are actions, such as erecting water-huts on highways, planting trees for providing shade to weary travellers, giving charity to temples, schools, etc., which are dharmas. Such actions are not strictly disinterested but are motivated by some remote desire for happiness. The good here is the attainment of heaven (svarga-prāpti).[50] The performance of such dharmas is believed to ensure abode in heaven and of sinful acts in hell (naraka).

It is through the progressive exercise of dharma as the self's own law, however, that the ātman not only overcomes the resistance of adharma but also deepens its selfhood. With every act of self-determination there is a corresponding decline in the power of resistance of sensibility, and with it there comes about increasing ease and spontaneity in the ātman's expression as the motive-force behind all volitional determination. So knowledge of truth (jñāna) is gained proportionate to increase in the power of self-determination.[51] Dharma is immanent in every act of the self's determination of the will and is reflected in action to the extent to which it has been determined by it. Hence moral goodness admits of degrees. Men are moral in infinite degrees and each man is unique as a moral agent. This seems to have supplied the Nyāya-Vaisheshikas, and other Indian thinkers following them, with the inference that each self must be unique in its own individuality. Insofar as, then, dharma is believed to be conducive to the realization of this uniqueness of the self, it comes to be defined as the source of

the emergence of a spiritual vision and of the supreme good.[52]

Prabhākara and Kumārila, the two noted exponents of the Pūrvamīmāṁsā school hold, in opposition to the Nyāya-Vaisheshika view, that it is the Veda, and the Veda alone, that is the ultimate source of our knowledge of dharma as conducive to the highest good,[53] and that there is no agency, personal or impersonal, that can supersede the unique authority of the Veda in any sense whatever. However, serious differences arise between the two thinkers in regard to the interpretation each offers of the nature of such knowledge. Kumārila comes forward with the contention that the real import of the Veda consists in revealing to man the kind of knowledge, otherwise unattainable, which is conducive to his good (ishṭasādhanatājñāna), and a code of duties indispensable to the attainment of this knowledge. His chief contention here is that no activity, ethical or otherwise, is possible unless there is the prospect of the realization of some sort of goodness thereby. In the case of optional deeds (kāmya-karma), this consists in the attainment of heaven (svarga-prāpti). And although the Veda does not specify any good in regard to the obligatory deeds (nitya-karma), yet they must be productive of some good, since they are also enjoined by the Veda.

It is instructive to note one important point of difference between the Nyāya-Vaisheshika view, on the one hand, and the Bhāṭṭa one, on the other. As we have noted before, for the Nyāya-Vaisheshikas all activity is actuated by the desire for the good

(ishṭa). This is equally true of the moral command. It derives its obligatory character from the desire for the good which is found to characterize human behaviour both at the natural and the moral level. Kumārila agrees with these thinkers in holding that no activity is conceivable apart from the desire for goodness, yet he is not prepared to maintain that the moral command derives its justification from this desire. His contention is that the prospective good (phala) determines only the motive, but not the obligatory character of the command. When once the end to be realized has presented itself to the will, it is the command that effectively determines it and thus brings about its realization. On this view, then, the good is a psychological condition or ground of determination, while the moral imperative is the principle of determination, called, respectively, arthabhāvanā and shabdabhāvanā. In other words, the desire for the good is only a psychological motive (pravarttaka), but is not the determinant of the moral imperative (vidheya). Here too, as in the Nyāya-Vaisheshika, two distinct sources of determination are recognized : the desire for pleasure, either here or hereafter; and the desire for liberation. Optional deeds are the outcome of determination by sensibility; obligatory deeds of determination by the self. This explains why Kumārila is led to draw the distinction between the conditional (kāmyādhikāra), and the unconditional (nityanaimittikādhikāra) aspects of volition. Those actions of which the ground of determination is the desire for liberation presuppose determination of them by the self. And it is in this sense alone that the self can be regarded as the sole moral authority (niyuktapurusha).

Prabhākara sees in this view an attempt to subvert the true import of the Veda, and asserts instead that its true intent, on the contrary, consists in specifying the principle of determination of all moral acivity which alone can guide the individual in his pursuit of the good (kāryatājñāna). He argues that every sensible man knows in what his good lies, but what he evidently lacks is the power to translate this knowledge into action. 'Even the Veda does not purify those morally unworthy'.[54] Nor, he contends, is it safe to assert that the Veda cannot vindicate its authority without extraneous aid. It represents the very spirit of dharma which as the objective verity of the moral order is apūrva, and as the law of duty is niyoga. Thus, whereas apūrva is the moral law of the impersonal spirit of the Veda, niyoga is the imperative, unconditionally and absolutely binding on the human will in all its moral endeavours.

Apūrva, according to Prabhākara, is only the objective counterpart of the subjective condition of self-determination. Morality arises only when the agent appropriates it in some measure of its objectivity, and subjects his will to its unconditional determination. To that extent alone is the will invested with the power of moral determination, and to that extent alone is the agent possessed of moral goodness. As againt the Naiyāyikas and the Bhāṭṭas, Prabhākara asserts that no activity can claim to be truly ethical, and for that matter to be truly human, unless the end sought thereby does not identify itself with that which is the source of its determination. Since, however, niyoga alone can be the only fitting source of volitional determination, no end to

be aimed at and attained can fall outside of this power of determination. Hence every activity determined by it becomes at once its own motive and its onwn end.[55] The end sought cannot lie apart from the ethical motive which is immanent in the act of volitional determination. This means that the end aimed at must be the flower and fruit of a will determined by niyoga alone. All Vedic injunctions are ends in the sense that they enjoin unconditional determination of volition by them. There is no good apart from moral goodness, which can result only from determination of volition by niyoga.[56] Prabhākara is highly critical of those Upanishadic injunctions which enjoin realization of the self's true nature (ātmasvarūpaparavākyas) independently of the emphasis on the subjective condition of self-determination as the ground of moral goodness.

All Vedic injunctions, Prabhākara notes, refer to two distinct and different kinds of activity: optional (kāmya-karma) and obligatory or unconditional (nityanaimittika-karma). In a kāmya-karma the motive is a particular desire and the end is possible of attainment only when appropriate activity has taken place. But unless the end has identified itself with, and represented itself as, that which is the source of determination, there can be no activity. The end must operate by first becoming the motive (sādhyasādhanapratiti). For example, in the injunction 'he who desires to attain heaven must perform sacrifice' (svargakāma yajeta) there is a specific kind of good which the agent believes possible of attainment. There is the desire for following the knowledge of a particular kind of goodness. But such a desire has no moral significance unless it

identifies itself with the power of volitional determination. The two—the end as the good and the motive as the ground of determination—must then fuse together, the latter claiming priority. Morality, likewise, requires the identification of the end with the motive which is the ground of determination of activity. In other words, there can be no moral end apart from moral determination. Morality, then, pertains not to the actions performed, not even to their anticipated results, but only to the self's power of determination of activity. Since only the unconditional duties as enjoined by the Veda can entail such determination, it is these alone that constitute dharma in the strictly ethical sense of the term (chodanālakshaṇ'rtho dharmaḥ).

It should now be clear how Prabhākara endeavours to maintain the supreme moral authority of dharma and yet shows that it is not definable in terms of anything other than itself, not even the good. To his critics—notably the Naiyāyikas and the Bhāṭṭas—who contend that no activity is possible without an end, his reply is that the end cannot lie apart from, or independent of, the self's law and its determinative capability. The volition must be brought within the purview of the self's moral law, since only then can the resultant activity be called moral. And what Prabhākara has in mind here is the point that what is moral must also be good, so that morality and goodness are identical. By seeking to derive the obligatory character of the moral imperative from the nature of the good, the Naiyāyikas undermine its unique authority. By driving a wedge between the good and the imperative, the Bhāṭṭas are unable to explain how the im-

perative can remain separate from or independent of the motive of the good. Against the former, Prabhākara maintains that the imperative is autonomous in its authority; against the latter, he shows that the two are ultimately the same and that it is wrong to regard dharma and ishṭṭa as two different aspects of the teleological unity of human nature.

IV

From the ultimate point of view ātman, according to Shaṁkara, is just its own perfection and nothing else besides its own essence (savarūpa). However, from the ordinary ethical point of view it is the subject of volitional determination and therefore the ground of dharma. But insofar as it is liable to be eclipsed by sensibility it is also to be conceived as the object of determination and, therefore, the ground of adharma. Thus, both dharma and adharma. at the empirical level (vyāvahārika-drishṭi) are predicates of the same self. In this sense the self becomes implicated in the moral order and is either the subject or the object of determination by the will. The unconditioned ātman becomes the ground of conditioned moral experience characteristic of dharma and adharma.[57]

Dharma is productive of the good (artha) and adharma of the evil (anartha).[58] Both are revealed by the Veda,[59] and cannot be known either through the senses, inference or reason.[60] The jīvas, insofar as they are essentially free, can earn either merit or demerit through activity, and are subject to experiences of pleasure or pain. Besides dharmas motivated by enlightened self-love, there are dharmas

which are the outcome of determination by niyoga or moral imperative and are truly disinterested (nishkāma). They are characterized by the sense of inner moral constraint (chodanā) and are productive of the highest good (niḥshreyasa).

Shaṁkara offers a very comprehensive and concrete scheme for the training of will and the development of ethical motivation. It consists of two parts : the first deals with training of the will as the condition of all disinterested deeds (nishkāma-karma). By this Shaṁkara means performance of actions free from determination by affections and aversions (rāga-dvesha). Those actions alone are truly disinterested that reflect jñāna as their law and light. All moral activity is productive of jñāna and must be undertaken in the spirit of disinterestedness (nishkāmyatā). In this context Shaṁkara advocates the performance of duties relating to one's caste (varṇa) and stage of life (āshrama), but all without hope of recompense. They bring strength to the will and inspire it to move steadily towards higher degrees of moral excellence. The training here consists of what is called the 'four-fold means' (sādhana-chatuṣhṭaya) : (1) ability to discriminate between what is eternal and what is transient (nityānityavastuviveka) ; (2) renunciation of all desire for enjoyment of objects here and hereafter (ihamutrārtha-bhogavirāga) ; (3) full control over the senses, mind and desires, and cultivation of virtues like detachment, patience, capacity for concentration (shamadamādi-sādhanasaṁpat) ; and (4) an ever ardent desire for absolute freedom (mumukshutva).[61]

The second part of the moral scheme reaches out to higher stages of jñāna and comprises the following three stages : (1) formal study of the Vedānta truths under the guidance of a qualified teacher (guru). The main part of this discipline consists in contemplating on the ultimate identity of the human soul with Brahman. The aspirant is asked to think for himself the truth 'I am Brahman' (ahaṁ brahma asmi). This is the stage of shravaṇa. (2) At the next stage, called reflection (manana), he must make part of himself the truth he has learnt of his ultimate oneness with Brahman. Such a conviction has to pass from intellect to realization, and this stage is not easy to attain. Various difficulties and doubts are likely to arrest its achievement. It is only through long practice and patience that the aspirant can hope for success ; and (3) there is the final stage. nidhidhyāsana, on embarking upon which the aspirant has to transform his convictions into actual experience of the truth (sākshātakāra). It is at this stage that one becomes a jñānin in every shnse of the term. This marks the realization of the Vedānta truth 'Thou art That' (tat tvam asi). At this stage there is neither dharma nor adharma, but only action undertaken from sheer love of goodness. 'For one who has awakened to a knowledge of the self, virtues like kindness do not require conscious exertion on the part of the jñānin. They are a second nature with him'[62]. He is lost to morality and its empirical limitations.

For Shaṁkara performance of obligatory deeds ensures spiritual freedom, but only indirectly. All such deeds ought to be done because they purify the mind (chittashuddhi) and pave the way for jñāna

without which there can be no self-realization. Thus, freedom is not the direct result of moral activity.[63] All such activity contributes to the strengthening of conviction in the ultimate victory over sensibility. Jñāna arises only when perfection in action (naish-karmya-siddhi has been achieved. Such knowledge alone reveals reality. Karma, then, is subsidiary to jñāna in Shaṁkara's ethical thought.

Following Shaṁkara's metaphysical position, critics have alleged that on the view of the identity of the soul and Brahman, there is no scope for ethics.[64] If Brahman is all, and all else is mere shadow, moral efforts are of no avail. This objection rests on the confusion of the distinction, which we have already referred to, between the ultimate or absolute view-point (pāramārthikadrishṭi) and the relative one (vyāvahārika-drishṭi). We are all of the same essence as Brahman in respect of our essential selfhood, but such a realization presupposes moral striving. Mere intellectual apprehension of the truth is not sufficient. What is necessary is a rigorous moral training so that all that resists or impedes such a realization can be overcome. The various dispositions, both acquired and innate, stand in our way and cannot be easily yoked to the rule of the spirit. We often succumb to them and may even believe that our subjection to them is in the very nature of our existence on earth. They continue to influence our thinking and our will, and the conflict arises when we are convinced that our true good lies not in serving but in disciplining them by means of the supreme law of our ātman. What we achieve in action promises more than we realize therein and it is in this consciousness that lies the

clue to our true goal. All disciplined activity makes possible the progressive discovery of our spiritual goal. With such a preparation of the intellect, emotion and will, we find ourselves securely established in the infinite soul (sthitaprajña). What was before a mere intellectual truth is now discovered to be our true essence. All moral efforts terminated in the realization of the self as the truth (sarvam karma 'khilam jñāne parisamāpyate). Jñāna results when the power of moral determination is fully in accord with the power of moral appreciation. Only moral strivings can bring us to this. And Shaṁkara, as we have noted above, lays down a very comprehensive scheme which aims at disciplining the various faculties of mind and ensuring thereby a harmonious development of the moral personality of the individual.

In Rāmānuja's Vishishṭādvaita the individual self is conceived as a free agent and, therefore, morally responsible for all his merits (puṇya) and demerits (pāpa). Even after the jīva has attained spiritual freedom, activity is in some sense his chief concern. The spiritual aspirant is enjoined to perform all the obligatory deeds (nitya-karma) not merely to prevent the sin that would accrue to him from the neglect of duty, but also to qualify himself for God's grace. Such actions constitute dharma.

This brings out the dominant role of bhakti or devotion in this system. Knowledge and activity are also recognized, but they are regarded as the constituents of bhakti. The discipline of jñāna (jñāna-yoga) is recommended so that the aspirant might become interested in reflecting upon the ultimate

reality of his self through the study of scriptures under a qualified teacher. All such knowledge leads the individual to the performance of duty not for its own sake but as a means to securing the mercy of God. After having succeeded in disciplining his will and intellect, he qualifies for embarking upon the all-inclusive yoga of bhakti. At this stage the devotee performs all his actions as a means to attaining a living communion with the Lord. Rāmānuja speaks of seven distinct virtues (sādhanas)[65] as a means to achieving complete perfection in the discipline of devotion, namely, viveka, vimoka, abhyāsa, kriyā, kalyāṇa, anavasāda, and anuddharsha. Viveka consists in purifying the body as the living temple of God. Vimoka is striving for freedom from all disturbing conditions, such as worldly desires. Abhyāsa is the ceaseless practice of contemplating upon divine attributes. Kriyā consists in engaging in the service of all living beings. Kalyāṇa is the practice of all altruistic virtues such as benevolence, non-violence, etc. The practice of the two disciplines of anavasāda and anuddharsha aim at securing for the aspirant freedom from despair, and giving in its place exultation, cheerfulness and hope. All the seven sādhanas are representative of a progressive scale in the ascent to spiritual freedom (paramapadasopāna)[66] and aim at the development of the aspirant's mental and moral personality : they are the integral aids to the discipline of bhakti. A harmonious development of the various sides of human personality is necessary for the performance of all duties, social and individual, and for qualifying oneself for divine communion.

Rāmānuja believes that the three-fold discipline of jñāna, karma and bhakti, insofar as it calls

for the study of scriptures, can be undertaken and followed only by the higher castes. Obviously, such a restriction deprived a large section of the society of the spiritual benefits of this discipline, and narrowed down its appeal to a select few. It is to remove this deficiency that Vishishṭādvaita offered a simpler pathway to God, which all men, irrespective of work, worth or birth, can adopt in their pursuit of divine love, mercy and grace. This is prapatti or sharaṇāgati. It calls upon the devotee 'to follow the will of God, renounce all that incurs his displeasure, generate full faith in him as the saviour of all, appeal to him alone for help, and surrender and dedicate to him all things in all meekness'.

Of special mention in this context is what is called ārta-prapatti or absolute self-surrender in moments of distress and agony. The underlying belief here is that one feels oneself nearest to God when one is passing through the most intense and excruciating pain, misery or suffering and sense of abandonment in this world. And the feeling of dependence upon the Divine Will reaches its climax when one feels oneself lifted up by the loving hands of the Lord. In such moments of intense longing for God one feels freed from all shackles of saṁsāra and taken up into his refuge. Even a single moment of such longing is believed to be sufficient for bringing about deliverance. This is why the discipline of of prapatti is considered to be superior even to bhakti, which involves a long, arduous preparation of intellect, will and emotion. And this also accounts for the mass popularity which Vishishṭādvaita came to enjoy. The system made an indelible impress, more because of a simple and universal ethical discipline

of a loving devotion to a personal God, than owing to any philosophical achievement.

V

It now follows that man has a passion for the search of the spiritual, which is the very antithesis of the natural in him, and which alone constitutes the *summum bonum* (niḥshreyasa) for him. The two different kinds of desire, natural and spiritual, have their own universe of origin and operation : the one is born of prakriti and works in accordance with its own law; the other stems from purusha and has, likewise, its own law. However, the two are ever in conflict with each other so far as the determination of will is concerned. When conceived of in the context of this conflict as the law of the perfectly rational self, dharma reinforces itself as the moral imperative unconditionally binding on the human will. If we represent moral goodness as the first point at which the rational self is able to counteract the influence of the sensuous self, wehave an indefinite hierarchy of points at each of which volitional determination is possible with relatively greater ease and spontaneity. It means that men differ in degrees in respect of the power of moral determination. Actions performed for the attainment of heaven involve some sort of sacrifice of the immediate promptings of the sensuous self and are dharmas. But at a higher degree of development of the power of moral determination such actions appear to be not truly disinterested, and become therefore unworthy of performance. At this stage nothing can move the will except the motive of duty. All actions now are dharmas, and possess true moral worth, because they

entail higher degrees of the development of spiritual determination. But the highest stage comes when morality finds its climax in a viewpoint from where distinction between dharma and adharma disappears and a truly universal vision is attained.

Every man, insofar as he is possessed of a self, is capable of self-determination. The ethics of dharma comes to be rooted in this power of self-determination. Since no man is devoid of this power, it is sin not to exercise it. But insofar as he is also possessed of the not-self he cannot resist activity. Dharma in its concrete expression is the conjoining of activity with the power of spiritual determination. God is the model of dharma insofar as his will is the necessary expression of the combination of the two. Moral goodness consists in striving to reach perfection in dharma. This, as we shall see in the next chapter, is the ideal to be attained.

The various Indian systems emphasize the need for the performance of dharmas in accordance with one's ability. These dharmas are as varied as the spheres in which they are to be performed, such as the four stages of life (āshramas), one's station in society, (varṇa), etc. Whatever may be these spheres, what is required is the 'good will'. We can legislate for all humanity only when the line of action derives its inspiration from the rational self alone. Plato's belief that philosophers alone should be the kings was the outcome of this conviction. Only he whose will is undeviatingly rooted in the law of the rational self can act on a truly ethical principle, and show others the path to justice and happiness. Since dharma requires acting on a principle that is valid for all rational beings, a truly moral man contributes

to social stability. Not having an ego, all his actions are for the welfare and happiness of all sentient beings. 'May all living beings look at me with the eye of a friend ; and may we look at one another with the eye of a friend'.[67]

Notes

1. RV., VI.xxi.3.
2. Ibid., IV.xxiii.8.
3. Ibid., I.xc.6.
4. Ibid., V. xxiii.10.
5. Ibid., I. clvi.3.
6. IV., xxxi.16.
7. RV., X.cxvii.154 ; AV.xi.5.
8. RV.I.xxiii. 22 ; IV.v.5. *passim.*
9. Ibid., X. xxxi.2.
10. Ibid., II. xxvii.15.
11. Bṛh. Up., IV. iv.5.
12. III.xvii.4.
13. I.ix.i.
14. Kaṭha Up., I.ii. 1-2.
15. Ibid., I.i.26, I.ii.10.
16. Bṛh. Up., IV. v.3.
17. *Ekavarṇam idaṁ pūrṇam vishvam āsid yudhishṭhira Karmakriyāvisheshena chāturvarṇyam pratishṭhitam.*
18. RV., VI.xxi.3.
19. BG., xviii.43.
20. Ibid., iv.13.
21. Mait. Up., iv.3.
22. A.B. Keith, op. cit., p. 584.
23. Muṇd. Up., III.ii.8.
24. BG., iii, 35; xviii.47.
25. *Āpastamba-dharma-sūtra,* I.xx. 3-4.

26. svarga, v. 6.
27. B.G., ii. 40.
28. *Nāhamdhārmaphalākāṅkshī rājaputrī chāramyuta Dharma eva manaḥ krishṇe svabhāvachchaiva me dhritam.*
29. See Albert Schweitzer, *Christianity and the Religions of the World*, p. 78; P.S. Mathai, *A Christian Approach to the Bhagavadgītā*, p. 38.
30. *Sūtrakritāṅga*, I.i.1, 13.
31. *Pañchāstikāya-sāra*, 165.
32. TS., vi.13.
33. *Pañchāstikāya-sāra*, 75.
34. Ibid., 29.
35. DS. 45.
36. *Āchārāṅga-Sūtra*, I. iv.1.
37. *Purushārthasiddhyopāya*, 149.
38. DS. 35.
39. *Dhammapada*, op. cit., 168-9.
40. Ibid., 190.
41. Ibid., 257.
42. D.T. Suzuki, *Outlines of Mahāyāna Buddhism*, (London : Luzac and Co., 1907) pp. 293-4.
43. *Divy-āvadāna*, (eds., E.B. Cowell and R.A. Neil). p. 154.
44. *Mahā-vyutpatti*, sect. 92. For a fuller account of these *pāramitās* see Har Dayal : *The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Budhdhist Sanskrit Literature* (London : Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1934).
45. MK., xix.
46. *Vaisheshika-Sūtra*, I.i.3.
47. NK., v. 15 : NM., p. 355 : *Padārthadharmasaṁgraha*. i.2.
48. *Vaisheshika-Sūtra*, ii.2.5,8,9.
49. Ibid., ii. 3,7, vi. 1,5,7,8.
50. NM., pp. 499-500.
51. *Vaisheshika-Sūtra*, VI.ii.15.
52. Ibid., I.i.2.
53. *Mīmāṁsā-Sūtra*, I.i.2.

54. *Vishishṭha-dharma-Sūtra*, vi.3. *Āchārhhīnam na puṇanti Vedaḥ.*
55. NM., p. 349. *Niyoga eva prerako niyoga eva chānushṭheya.*
56. Vishvanātha, *Siddhānta-Muktāvalī*, pp. 471-3, *Svav-isheshaṇavattāpratisandhāna-janyakāryatājñānasya pravartā-ktvāt.*
57. S.B. Kaṭha Up., I.ii.14 *Anātmajñāvishaya eva dharmā-dharmādilakshaṇaḥ saṁsāro na brahmajñasya dharmā-dharmādyanupapatteḥ.*
59. SBS., I.i.2.
59. Ibid., III.i.25.
60. Ibid., II.i.13.
61. SBS., I.i.1.
62. *Naishkarmya-siddhi*, iv.69.
63. SBS., I.i.4.
64. John McKenzie, op. cit., p. 207.
65. *Shrībhāshya*, I.i. 1.
66. See *Shrībhāshya*, IV.i.3. 'I am thy holy divinity and thou art myself'; *Tiruvāymoyi*, II.iii.4 'In return for thy great and gracious gift—the mingling of thy spirit with mine—I have entirely yielded up my spirit to thee'.
67. YV., xxxvi.18.

Chapter V

DHARMA AND GOD

It is now abundantly clear that only a rigorous mode of reasoning could have led the Indians to unanimously formulate the concept of dharma defined in the preceding chapter as the law on which an absolutely rational being would necessarily act. However, the signs of schism in their ranks soon appeared in regard to the interpretation of the implication of this concept. It is here that an interesting feature begins to emerge in Indian thought which in its developing phases continues to determine and dominate its chequered history, namely, belief or disbelief in a personal God (Īshvara). The arguments adduced in favour of or against the existence of God centre around the question of whether dharma can be conceived as capable of operating by itself in the determination of moral and natural phenomena or whether it presupposes some conscious, personal agency to manifest and operate it. Accordingly, two distinct lines of thinking emerge here. According to the one, dharma as a mere form of law requires a completely rational will as its executive agency; while, according to the other, dharma as absolutely autonomous and all-powerful is capable of operating by itself, like a a law of nature. In the characteristically theistic systems, God becomes, therefore, the ideal embodiment or custodian of dharma. Thus, while, on the one hand, God is the source of determination of all phenomena, moral and natural, he is, on the other.,

the ideal counterpart of all human volition. In this sense the difference between the divine and the human volition is one of the degrees of perfection with which each engages in activity. That is to say, the divine will is as much bound by dharma as the human will, with this difference, of course, that the former experiences it in a manner in which the latter does not.[1]

I

It has already been pointed out that the concept of rita in the Vedic tradition signifies the law of determination, without itself being determined by anything higher. As the regulative principle of Spirit, it is prior to all determination and, therefore, the condition of all that is determinable. With the different spheres of determination, it manifests itself in different cosmic forms. Since rita is essentially conscious insofar as it is representative of conscious selfhood, these cosmic forms come to be conceived as conscious in their activity. Thus arises the multitude of conscious beings or deities in the Vedic thought. Bound by rita (ritaja) each has its own sphere of activity in the proper performance of which it rejoices.[2] Indra upholds it and manifests its form in all his activity.[3] Varuṇa, as its custodian (ritasya gopā), derives all his strength from it and discharges all his functions in strict conformity with it (dhritavrata). All these personal agencies impose upon themselves the immortal, impersonal spirit of rita, and thereby share in life divine. And it is because of rita that the entire universe is an ordered whole.[4]

Since rita manifests itself in and through the determination of phenomena, both moral and

physical, these phenomena themselves become the symbols of divine immanence. This explains why the various deities come to be associated with these two different kinds of phenomena. Thus, the various natural phenomena are personified as fire-god (Agni), rain-god (Indra), sun-god (Sūrya), dawn-goddess (Ushā), cloud-god (Parjanya), etc. In the same way, some deities are invested with moral authority, so as to act as the custodians of the cosmic order. Thus, Agni is not only the fire-god but also 'the knower of men's deeds', and the helper in lifting the mortal man to 'the highest immortality'[5]. Varuṇa ensures proper punishment to sinners.[6] Since there is a division of functions and attributes, there are prayers addressed to different deities for different things. For instance, we come across prayers[7] for remission of the guilt of sinning against a man who is dear to us, of betraying a friend or comrade, of doing injury to a neighbour or a stranger, etc. In another hymn the devotee implores his favourite god to move him away from all sins.[8] There are prayers for securing happiness and wealth.[9] A hymn in the *Rig-Veda* personifies faith, and becomes a prayer : 'O Faith, make us faithful'[10]. All such prayers were inevitably accompanied by the common desire to establish some sort of an intimate personal relationship with the deities. For the man of faith, every natural event signified the expression of the will and power of the gods, and in his loving devotion he exalted them to the highest conceivable objects of affection and reverence. Expressions such as 'Father-Heaven', 'Mother-Earth', 'Brother-Agni', are indicative of a deep sense of devotion and attachment.

Whatever the impression the critics have formed of the general provision of the Vedic perspective, it cannot be denied or doubted that the Vedic Indian had a strong metaphysical orientation. He was unswervingly convinced that all that was, all that is, and all that will be, had behind it a certain cause in terms of which alone it could be explained. He argued from the existence of the universe to its ultimate basis, a position that finds itself exemplified in all subsequent Indian thinking. The Upanishadic Indian was the first to inherit it. The only modification he could introduce in this scheme was to replace the Vedic gods by his own conception of a personal God.

As in the Vedic thought, in the Upanishadic speculation, too, God (Īshvara) comes to be viewed as the basis of explanation both of the physical and the moral aspects of the universe. In respect of the former, he is its creator.[11] The diversity so conspicuously revealed in the physical world is due to the diversity of forms God possesses.[12] Three such forms are explicitly recognized : jñāna or wisdom, which guides the divine mind in the governance of the world ; bala, strength, or the executive aspect of the divine mind ; kriyā, or the actual manifestation of the divine will. This is the immanent form of God. But he is not wholly contained by the physical universe and is, therefore partly transcendent (parastāt)[13] : 'He moves and he does not move ; he is far and he is near ; he is within all this and he is also outside of all this'[14].

As regards the moral sphere, God is the supreme judge of moral quality of all human deeds (karmādhyaksha), the inner self of all beings (sarva-

bhūtāntar ātmā), the in-dweller of all beings (sarva-bhūtādhivāsas), and the eternal witness of all that happens here and now (sākshī). Nothing falls outside of the divine will and activity. It is only through God's grace that we can attain his status and obtain a glimpse of his greatness.[15] He is the pure form of thought (sva-chitta-stham), and, therefore, the motive-force by which this divine wheel is made to turn.[16]

The point that needs to be carefully noted here is that theism is not the basic concern of the Upanishadic thinkers. Excepting the *Shvetāshvatara Upanishad,* which has been our sole text in the treatment of the concept of God, all other Upanishads are almost indifferent to it. If what we have stated in the preceding chapter is any clue, we can now unhesitatingly state that the basic philosophic concern of the Upanishads was Brahman. This exclusive preoccupation was, in all probability, the result of a sharp reaction against the Vedic henotheism. The *Gītā*, now to be considered, seeks to strike a *via media* here. Although reality is the Upanishadic Brahman, God, Krishṇa, is the personal Being of the Bhāgavat religion of the *Mahābhārata* of which the text under discussion forms a part. The voice of God declares, 'This is My word of promise that he who loveth Me shalt never perish'[17]. It is through devotion and love (bhakti) that man can reach his God. The only prerequisite to attaining a loving communion with the Supreme Master is purity of heart. When offerings are made from a pure heart they become sacrifices (yajña), and gradually loosen the tight hold of the sense of egoism, which drives a wedge between the devotee and his Master. There-

is, in the eyes of the *Gītā*, greater sacrifice than that of performing actions as a means to the furtherance of the divine plan. It is here that a man can find the best form of self-fufilment. 'Fix they mind on Me, be devoted to Me, make sacrifices for Me, prostrate thyself before Me ; so shalt thou come to Me. I promise thee truly, for thou art dear to Me'.[18] Those who carry out their duties as means (nimittamātram) to the fulfilment of the will and command of God are alone dear to him. And they alone are worthy of divine grace (prasāda).[19] The discipline of devotion (bhakti-yoga), as advocated by the *Gītā*, becomes in the subsequent theistic schools of the Vedānta the basic ingredient of a truly religious life.

While this is the picture the *Gītā* paints of a God of love and affection, there is in it another conception of God which, unlike the former, is strictly metaphysical in intent. On this view, God is the abode of dharma[20] ; he is its custodian (dharma-goptā).[21] Bound by dharma, God is ever active, but is not at all affected by the activity undertaken by Him. The entire universe unmistakably manifests the Divine Will in each of its activities. 'Whatever being there is, endowed with glory and grace, know that to have arisen from a fragment of My splendour'[22]. Although God is immanent in the universe, yet He is not wholly contained by it : 'All beings', says the *Gītā's* God, 'abide in Me, but I do not abide in them. My spirit, which is the source of all beings, sustains them but does not abide in them'[23]. Since the Divine Will is firmly established in dharma, it dispenses full justice to those who are ever busy in struggling for the

cause of righteousness. The world has its foundation in the eternal law of dharma, and all that falls to our lot in life is precisely what we deserve in terms of our past deeds. In this aspect, God is not a being of whom favours may be asked. All that we get is all that we have already stored up in our past, remote or immediate. All that meets us in life is the remission of that law which is ever active as a form of necessary determination (svabhāvas tu pravartate).[24]

We are now in a position to make here a few observations by way of a comparative approach. With nothing in their past to commit or guide them to a particular mode of thinking, the Vedic Indians evolved a procedure which deeply influenced the metaphysical reasonings not only of the Upanishads and the *Gītā*, but also, as we shall soon see, of the various later systems. The only thing the Upanishads and the *Gītā* could hope to do by way of an improvement upon the Vedic position was, as pointed out above, to replace the multiplicity of personal beings—gods—by the unity of a personal Being—God. But this by itself is not an improvement, for there is behind the multiplicity of gods, the unity of an objective law. The various gods are no more than the conscious beings representing the various cosmic functions. And this is what exactly the God of the Upanishads and the *Gītā* stands for. The details of explanation are characteristically Vedic in import. We are, then, irresistibly led to conclude that the Vedic tradition did not lose its hold on the succeeding phases of the Indian philosophical perspective.

II

In course of time, Buddhism split up into two rival camps, each claiming to represent faithfully the essence of the teachings of their Master. The one came to be called the Hīnayāna and the other the Mahāyāna. The former sought to confine itself strictly to the utterances of Buddha, and, therefore, refrained from indulging in metaphysical speculations. The latter interpreted these utterances in the context of their underlying metaphysical implications, and claimed thereby to be more catholic and comprehensive. It is because of this claim that the latter arrogated to itself a position of superiority over the former. That explains briefly why they preferred to be called Mahāyānists or followers of the greater path, and distinguished themselves from the other camp which they called Hīnayānists or followers of the lesser path. The life of Buddha is regarded by the latter as the highest ideal which should inspire every man in his pursuit of the goal. With a firm faith in his own ability to reach the goal and in the moral law that guarantees success, the Hīnayānist is always busy in striving for the ideal of arhat-ship, or nibhānā. The noble path preached by Buddha is his sole guide. The main inspiration comes from what the Master taught his disciples : 'Be a light unto thyself' (ātma-dīpo bhava). His last exhortation to them was : 'And now, brethren, I take my leave of you. All the constituents of Being are transitory : work out your salvation diligently'.[25]

The Mahāyānist sect represents in certain respects the very antithesis of Hīnayānism, and in its speculative instinct comes fairly close to the

Vedāntic tradition. The two preceding chapters unmistakably support this claim. The most significant point of departure consists, however, in the Mādhyamika assertion that the historical Buddha was only an incarnation of Ādi-Buddha or the Ultimate. This conception of Buddha as Bhagavān corresponds to that of Īshvara in the Vedānta. In his perfection, he is completely free from the imperfections of passions (kleshāvaraṇa) ; is possessed of omniscience (sarvākā; ajña), and is absolute truth (prajñā-pāramitā). He is characterized by five perfect forms of knowlede—namely, advaya-jñāna, or knowledge absolutely devoid of the distinctions of being and non-being; ādarsha-jñāna, or knowledge which is ideal in the sense that, since there is nothing higher that remains to be known, the one that characterizes the cosmic reality is alone the highest ; pratyavekshaṇā-jñāna, or knowledge that features all distinctions among higher objects, without confounding any of them ; samatājñāna, or knowledge characterized by equanimity of outlook and attitude towards all beings ; and, lastly, krityanuṣṭhāna-jñāna, or knowledge that invariably leads to active love for all beings.

Buddha, as the personal God, is conceived as the unity of three different forms of embodiment : dharma-kāya or the embodiment of dharma as in the Hindu tradition ; saṁbhoga-kāya, or the embodiment of all blissful experience ; and nirmāṇa-kāya, or the creative force behind the universe. Buddha as the dharma-kāya is the essence and truth of the form and essence of dharma (dharma-prāpta), and is, therefore, the highest conceivable reality. He is in this sense a personal God to whom innumerable

powers and merits are ascribed. As saṁbhoga-kāya, Buddha is conceived as the emodiment of all the auspicious qualities which the human heart cherishes in its dissatisfaction with the conditions of saṁsāra. Here he appears as the Supreme Being dwelling in the akanishṭha heaven, enjoying the company of a host of bodhisattvas. The various perfections (vibhūtis) attributed to the Buddha-God are regarded as the highest that man can attain to in his pursuit of goodness.[26] As nirmāṇa-kāya, Buddha is looked upon as endowed with a divine will which expresses itself as the creative will that Buddha assumes a cosmic form and appears in the world as its savour. Concern for the emancipation, not only of humanity, but of all beings, is one of the most prominent traits of Buddha's divine personality—that of Supreme God. In his compassion for all beings he incarnates himself so as to save them from the sorrows and sufferings of this world. It is this intense desire on his part for the welfare and final release of all sentient beings (sarvamukti) that makes him mahākaruṇā. Gautama is one of an endless series of Buddhas who descend to earth for the emancipation of all beings. 'No activity of the Buddhas is without reason ; their very birth is for the good of all creatures'. The bodhisattvas are the agents of God and seek to carry out the divine mission by working for the welfare of all beings.

With his unshakable faith in the ideal of arhatship, the Hīnayānist takes the life and teachings of Buddha to be the sole guidelines for a truly spiritual life. Thus, Hīnayānism is more a religion than a philosophy. From the standpoint of this religion, Gautama the Buddha was only an exalted human

being insofar as he realized the truth through his own independent efforts. He was a man, not God, before he attained enlightenment, but became an 'ideal man' (arhat) on attaining this goal. There is no God. Man is his own God, and he must realize his divinity by becoming an arhat. The universe is governed by the rational necessity of dharma, and he must not think that God exists to save him from saṁsāra, or to grant him liberation.

III

The notions of the Absolute and of God, formulated by the systems discussed above, seem to point to an inherent duality in thought. According to these systems, thought represents to itself a reality which is not a reality in fact. Can thought accept anything as real which it knows is unreal from a higher point of view ? The Upanishadic thinkers were well aware of this duality.[27] One of the easiest ways to avoid it would be to accept as the sole reality what could be conceived by thought alone. This means, in effect, the rejection of absolutism, of the indeterminable 'beyond'. This is the most significant point in respect of which the various Hindu schools to be considered in this section deviate from their predecessors. They differ from their predecessors in many remarkable ways, but, as we shall presently see, among themselves they differ even more sharply in regard to the nature of reality and its relation to this universe.

Having disowned the concept of a transcendent reality for the reason stated above, the Nyāya-Vaisheshikas still find themselves in substantial agreement with the theistic teachings of their pre-

decessors. As an embodiment of dharma, God (Īshvara) comes to be conceived by them as pure Form, to use Aristotle's well-known expression, and, consequently, as acting in the very spirit and spontaneity of this law.[28] He is possessed of three perfections, viz., moral law, knowledge and equanimity (dharmajñānasamādhisaṁpad), and is, in contrast to the human selves, the supreme Self (paramātman). Consequently, the divine will comes to be lookd upon as necessarily determined by the moral law (saṁkalpānuvidhāyīcāsya dharmaḥ). As such, God is eminently qualified for acting as the supreme judge of the moral quality of all human deeds (karmādhyaksha), as also the apportioner of the fruits thereof (karmaphaladātā). The act of willing a particular course of action is conditional and contingent when grounded in our personal likes and dislikes, but when determined by rational necessity it is binding on all rational beings alike. The divine will cannot claim impunity from this determination. Thus, it is quite wrong to say that dharma, according to the Nyāya-Vaisheshikas, signifies only 'the will of the Lord, i.e., his mere pleasure or fiat'.[29]

Strange to say, the notion of God does not find any place in the *Vaisheshika Sūtra* of Kaṇāda, while the *Nyāya Sūtra* of Gautama makes only a casual reference to it. It is only at a later stage of the development of the Nyāya-Vaisheshika thought that the idea of God comes to be accepted and made an integral part of the scheme of reality. The attempt to explain the universe in terms of atoms apparently needed a conscious, spiritual Being who could order and direct it in keeping with the moral requirements

of human beings. Although he bears a close affinity with human beings insofar as he is also an ātman, yet he is conceived as distinct and distinguishable from them, insofar as he is pure spirit (paramātman). This is taken to mean that, while dharma and consciousness do not characterize the jīvātmans in the state of their perfection, they do characterize him eternally. He is conceived as possessing all perfections like omniscience, absolute knowledge, etc. His volition is ever active in directing the world to its proper course, and his dharma alone determines it in all its activity. All that happens here and now exhibits the divine stamp thereon. Since, however, the atoms whereby he creates the world are equally eternal, he is only the efficient cause of it. Thus, there is no creation in the absolute sense of the term. All his creation is subject to conditions of time. He creates and maintains the world so long as its existence is necessitated by conditions inherent in it, and destroys it when these conditions so demand, though only to create it again. This is all due to sheer necessity inherent in the nature of the world. Since such a necessity can only be blind and mechanical, God as the intelligent Being directs the world-process to its rational course. There is no arbitrariness here. God is only the executive agency and at what time or under what conditions the world-process needs dissolution is solely the necessity of the past deeds of the beings that have contributed to its continuation in that particular *kalpa*. It remains in a state of suspended animation till the time the necessity arises for it to start again.

IV

The Indians were wonder-struck by the order and design so conspicuous by their presence in the universe around us. One of the plausible explanations offered of this phenomenon is that it is but an expression of a conscious, intelligent principle. Everything acts in a certain determinate way and is directed to the realization of a specific purpose. Nothing can claim impunity from the determination of this principle, since it operates absolutely and unconditionally. This principle is called dharma. God is just the executive agency of this law. Dharma is an objective, universal and necessary principle of self as such, and God is as much bound by it as man, except, of course, that the latter does not manifest it in its perfection. This is the view developed by the *Gītā* and is accepted, at teast in outlines, by the Nyāya-Vaisheshikas. They rejected the notion of Brahman as the absolute spirit and retained only the notion of dharma and God. The Prābhākaras of the Pūrvamīmāṁsā school hold that if dharma is a law of selfhood, it alone should be sufficient to determine all cosmic phenomena independently of the agency of God. Hence they reject God and retain only the principle of dharma, often called apūrva. Buddha, as we know, rejected even the notion of soul and retained that of dharma to make things still simpler. Although he did not spell out clearly the various implications of this notion, it is evident that he used it as synonymous with the objective, impersonal and necessary law of reason. The whole universe, in his view, is grounded in dharma and it works in fulfilment of its spirit.

This explanation is opposed by certain schools, like the Jaina and the Sāṁkhya. Their contention is that the entire physical universe (as also the results of actions motivated by sensuous desires) is subject to the determination of the law of mechanical causation, called karma. It is contended that karma as such a law is sufficient for explaining all natural phenomena in terms of it. The underlying idea here is that the like can be explained in terms of the like alone. All natural events are caused and conditioned by the law of mechanical causation viz., karma, and they cannot, therefore, be explained in terms of any other agency. Self, then, comes to be cut to its own size in both these schools. It is one of a countless number of substances, like the chair, the table, and so on, differing from them only by virtue of its being conscious or intelligent. Dharma, of necessity, comes to be conceived as just a disposition of the empirical self, a mere subjective motive of doing the right. The autonomy of the self is stressed and a sphere of its being carved out. Whatever remains is believed to be under the operation of the law of karma. It is equated with God to all intents and purposses. That is the reason why these two schools reject all other explanations based on dharma and God. Later Hindu philosophers like Shaṁkara, bitterly criticised this view. Their contention was that karma is a blind and mechanical force, and cannot, therefore, account for this world of ours. Left to itself it cannot lead to any meaningful activity. It is a mere impulse which can be given an orientation by a conscious, spiritual being like God. The whole universe, it is argued, is based on certain eternal, impersonal principles which have one thing in

common to one another viz., harmonious functioning so as to ensure complete order in the universe. There is nothing lawless. Everything has a specific function to discharge, or to put it in a slightly different way, has its own dharma. We say that it discharges its function in behaving according to its dharma. The whole universe exhibits its dharma in the regularity of the sequence of events. All this is indicative of the eternal laws ensuring harmony and order in every sphere of Being. This is the immanent teleology exhibited in the working of the universe, and man as part of it has his own law in fulfilment of which he alone can exhibit his own purpose.

V

We shall conclude by stating that from the strictly philosophical point of view theism is not basic to the Indian mind. In the various absolutistic movements—the Upanishads, *Gītā* and Shaṁkara—it is just a half-hearted concession made to the ordinary, practical point of view. In the Nyāya-Vaisheshika the notion is resorted to more for reasons of expediency than for a really philosophic concern. Many other schools, like the Jaina, Buddhism, Sāaṁkhya, and Pūrvamīṁānsā repudiate it because it does not fit into their systems which they all claim to be based on the sound and secure foundations of reason.

With this the discipline of bhakti loses its appeal. No serious philosopher, for instance, is able to reconcile the fact of grace and mercy of God with the necessity of karma. That is one reason why even a school like the Nyāya-Vaisheshika does not accept it as any important in the matter of

attaining moksha. Of course, the path of karma (karma-yoga) has its appeal, because it has its deep ethical implications. The strange thing for us to note here is that even certain orthodox Hindu schools rejected the notion of God and shared their philosophic conviction with the heterodox schools like Jainism and Buddhism. Reason, rather than revelation, was their instrument in the quest for truth.

Notes

1. Ritasya ramyantadevāḥ.
2. RV., I. cxlvii.
3. RV., IV. xxiii. 10.
4. Ibid., X. cxxi. 1.
5. RV., I. lxxii. 7.
6. Ibid., I. xxii. 7.
7. Ibid., I. lxv. 3.
8. Ibid., V. lxxxv. 7.
9. Ibid., II. xxviii. 5,9.
10. Ibid., X. lxxxviii. 8.
11. Ibid., X. 151.
12. Shvet. U.P., v. 13.
13. Ibid., vi. 7.
14. Isha U.P., 5.
15. Shvet. U.P., iii. 20., vi. 21.
16. Ibid., vi.1.
17. BG., ix. 21.
18. Ibid., xviii. 65.
19. Ibid., xviii. 62.
20. Ibid., xiv. 27.
21. Ibid., xi. 18. M.B., xii. cxc. 13.
22. BG., x. 41.
23. Ibid., iv. 4-5.
24. Ibid., v. 14.
25. *Mahā Parinirvāṇa Sūtra*, vi. I.
26. BG. Chapter XI.
27. Brih. Up., II, iv. 14, Iv. v. 15.
28. Uddyotakara, *Nyāyavārtika*, Iv. 1. 21.
29. EH., P. 143.

Chapter VI

DHARMA AND MOKSHA

It is one of the basic assumptions of most Indian philosophers that the self is of the nature of absolute goodness. It is in this sense that the self is often identified with dharma which is defined as the law of absolute goodness. It is here that we are introduced to the sphere of ethics. While in its perfection a self would *necessarily* act from sheer love of goodness, a self under human limitations *ought* to act in accordance with this principle of goodness. We have already shown that this is the distinction the Indians make between dharma as the metaphysical reality and dharma as the principle of ethical activity.

Thus looked at, dharma is both the ideal and the motive of all human activity. But the difference between the ideal and the actual is, indeed, immeasurable. So we can transcend the level of the actual by degrees. Each act of self-determination brings us closer and closer to the goal. What we have attained promises more. Something higher is felt to elude our grasp. But if there is the requisite will and patience what eludes will be a reality—something we shall possess as our own being, something the attainment of which will bring us true satisfaction.

All this is, however, easier said than done. We act contrary to our natural being when we seek to bring dharma in the forefront and determine the

volition thereby. We experience the pull of two opposing forces—that of the higher self seeking to determine the volition by means of dharma and the sensuous self by means of its own law, sometimes called adharma. It is in this sense that both dharma and adharma are referred to as the attributes (guṇas) of the self. In a particular situation a man may know what is objectively right, yet may not do the right. In our language, the power of moral determination does not correspond to the power of moral appreciation. The ideal of absolute goodness is attained when the two correspond to each other perfectly. As Kant said, "ought is here out of place because the volition is in tune with the law". What is objectively right is recognized as such and done as a matter of normal habit. As Shaṁkara said, "In an individual who has awakened to a knowledge of the self, virtues like kindness entail no conscious effort whatsoever. They are a second nature with him".[1]

I

The basic contention of the Indians is that what man is in his inmost being transcends what he knows he is. Accordingly, what most of them felt called upon to do was to account for the way whereby that which transcends under human limitations could be represented to the human consciousness. The best way in which they thought they could do so was first to conceive of the transcedent aspect as an objective law constituting the moral order of the universe and then to represent it as the counterpart of man's essential selfhood. All this was taken to mean that, though the real ever abides in its own perfection, yet man is its concrete embodiment. It

is by virtue of his possession of this transcendent reality that he can claim to be the moral agent. This reality is "dharma". It is, as we have already pointed out, the absolute truth at the level of human conception. If Brahman is the absolute truth at the transcendent level, dharma is the absolute reality at the conceptual level. It is in this sense that the *Brihadāraṇyaka Upanishad*, as pointed out before, speaks of dharma beyond which there is nothing.

This type of reasoning seems to have commended itself for three obvious reasons : (1) Since the transcendent reality defies all modes of human determination, it could at least be described as, and explained in terms of, what, *faute de mieux,* might be called "moral law". This is what dharma actually means. Good, then, becomes an essential or intrinsic nature of reality in so-far as it comes to be humanly conceived as the counterpart of the essential being of man, and, therefore, the object of realization by him. Thus, 'unless the good is an intrinsic part of the real, the real does not provide a basis for moral obligation and that means that there is no metaphysical basis of ethics'[2]. (2) Although the self is intrinsically devoid of the capacity for activity, yet under human conditions it comes to be conceived as capable of acting on dharma which it is assumed to have in common with, or corresponding to, the represented character of reality. The good, which is dharma in its objective spirit, can be realized only when it is made the mark and the measure of our volition. The implication of the views on (1) and (2)—on what we may propose to call religion and ethics, respectively—seem to have convinced the Hindus of the need to evolve such a representational procedure for the

ostensible reason that, in the absence of man's conscious grip over his unrealized, transcendant nature, the danger of his succumbing to the dictates of his sensuous self was out of all proportion to his power of moral determination. As such, all their optimism about the ultimate success in the realization of the transendant truth could hardly beguile them into overlooking the important fact that all the emphasis they placed on the need of cultivating a discipline of self-determination (dharma) would be of little avail unless a constant, living communion with a determinate. Objective ideal preceded and even ensured volitional determination. It was only such an ethical discipline which, in the eyes of the Indians, could be most effective in the conquest of the lower self, as also in the realization of the highest spiritual being the reality of which is accepted by almost all the major schools.

The distinct outcome of such an approach has been that ethics—understood as the subjective principle of acting in the determination of the objective law of dharma, and religion regarded as the realization of this law either as the law of one's selfhood, or as one's law identical with God's—come to acquire a source, sphere, and significance of their own in the constitution of reality as humanly represented. Indeed, the long history of the development of the Hindu thought bears eloquent testimony to the passionate search made by the Hindus to account for reality in terms of an eternal, moral order whose laws are absolutely immutable and impersonal in their metaphysical aspect, and so absolutely unconditional in their appeal and application to human will in their ethical aspect. What,

therefore, shall engage our attention in this chapter is the consideration of the way in which the moral law in its metaphysical aspect came to be formulated and represented to the human consciousness in the various Hindu texts and schools. It is the human charactersitic of being oblivious to this law and of craving for a representing medium that has been dramatically portrayed thus: 'Where everything, indeed, has become the self itself, whom and by what should one think? By what can we know the universal knower?'[3] Having lost his grip over this very law (dharma-sammuḍhachetaḥ), Arjuna opened his heart to Krishṇa in the *Gītā* with these words, "With an apparently confused voice thou seemest to bewilder my understanding. Tell me decisively the way whereby I can attain to the highest good"[4].

II

Although the Vedas and the Upanishads speak of dharma as the highest spiritual truth, yet, surprizingly enough, neither sought to explain the ultimate goal in terms thereof. It was the *Gītā* which sought to work out, as exhaustively as possible, the various metaphysical, religious and ethical implications of the concept of dharma. Here we are concerned with its religious connotation.

We have already shown that, according to the *Gītā*, what alone counts as ethical, properly so called, is the motive of dharma. We are truly moral in our actions when what determines us to act are not our personal likes and dislikes, pride and prejudice (rāga-dvesha),but is the law of our essential selfhood. It is such a law which is objective in reference, impersonal in appeal and application, a *priori* in

origin, and binding on all human beings alike. There is neither any discretion nor arbitrariness. Such a principle alone can be the reality of man and the foundation of this universe. It is what determines everything to behave in a certain uniform way. An action, determined by this law, has in it a worth which is not conditional and contingent but is absolute and unique.

It seems desirable to refer here briefly to the *Gītā's* ethical doctrine known as "karma-yoga". The main thrust of this doctrine is that man is possessed of the unique power of spiritual determination of all activity which arises from prakriti or matter. All such karma is, then, duty which ought to be performed without any hope of recompense. 'Your right is to perform the karma, not to act for its fruit'. The concept of duty is the chief feature of the ethical perspective of the *Gītā*. A man of dharma will alone be guided by the consideration of the good of others (sarva-bhūta-hitam), and seek to engage in the task of social reconstruction (loka-saṁgraha). The aim is to give up all sense of egoism (ahamkāra) as ordinarily expressed in one's arrogating to oneself the agency of all deeds. The *Gītā* points out that no man can help engaging in some karma or other. But we display our human capability only when we exercise the law of dharma in the determination of all karmas. Those who do not engage themselves in karma and yet desire different kinds of things for their enjoyment are hypocrites (mithyāchāra). Our dharma is fulfilled truly only when it is allowed to manifest itself in the determination of all those activities that are presented to us by the physical universe. We can dis-

charge all our moral obligations only when we are conscious of possessing our "self" in some measure.

What, then, the *Gītā* seeks to stress is the fact that we are sinners if we do not allow our dharma to fulfil itself in the determination of actions. It is in this sense that it gives up the negative ethics of renunciation (saṁnyāsa) and seeks to build instead a positive philosophy of dharma. It is here, then, that the Hindu ethical thought takes a new turn and influences thereby the subsequent phases of its development. Dharma is, no doubt, an important concept in the early Hindu thought, but all its metaphysical, religious and ethical implications were ignored. Dharma, then, is not only an ethical priniciple but also an ethical ideal. The goal consists in the self's realizing itself as the very essence and truth of dharma: 'Swiftly does the individual soul become one with dharma (dharmātman), and it obtains lasting peace".[5] This is the supreme state of realization which dawns only when dharma has reached the highest state of fruition.[6] And, so far as God, like the soul, is the very embellishment of dharma, the goal to be attained may also be described as the soul's effecting equivalence with the dharma of the Divine Will.[7] At this level God is conceived as the "other" to the soul and even in the state of Moksha the soul is taken to retain its individuality.

However, whether the goal is conceived as the soul's attaining equivalence with the objective spirit of dharma, or as the soul's attaining status of God as himself the embodiment of dharma, in both the cases there comes to supervene on it supreme peace and it becomes absolutely freed from all the bondage of the not-self. It transcends the realm of moral

obligations (natasya kāryam vidyate). It will continue to work so long as it remains associated with the mortal frame of the body : yet only from sheer love of goodness. Even God is conceived as an ideal karma-yogin who is ever engaged in the creation and maintenance of the world. Although he has nothing to achieve, yet he is ever busy in determining the course of the universe in accordance with what it necessitates. It is because of God's absolutely spiritual or perfect will that the world continues to run its course.

But the *Gītā* reminds us that both these goals are after all representations of human conception and could not, therefore, be regarded as truly ultimate. What we are reminded of here is the fact that the difficulty of those whose thoughts are set on the Unmanifest is greatest, since the goal of the Unmanifest is hard to reach by embodied beings.[8] Dharma is the ideal arrived at by means of the mode of conceptual determination of this Unmanifest. At this level dharma is the absolute truth much as Brahman is at the transcendent level. This means that the ultimate truth is neither the soul's attaining itself as dharma nor its affecting equivalence with the will of God as the embodiment of dharma. The highest truth is, then, realized only when both these conceptual representations have been given up and there comes about the soul's realizing itself as the very essence of Brahman or absolute spirit. Hence, the injunction of the *Gītā's* God 'abandon all dharmas and seek shelter in me alone'.[9] This is the level of the indeterminable and the unconditioned or absolute where there is neither the self nor dharma nor realization of anything, nor even God

as the judge and rewarder of the joys and sorrows to human souls in accordance with the moral quality of their deeds. 'The Supreme Self', says the *Gītā*, 'does not create agency for people, nor does it act, nor does it connect results with the deeds performed. It is the law that prevails. The all-pervading self does not take upon itself the sin or merit of any body. Wisdom is enveloped in ignorance whereby creatures are bewildered'.[10]

III

The Hindu metaphysics, it may be stated here, rests on two fundamental notions : self (purusha) as the highest embodiment of consciousness (chit), and the not-self (prakriti) as the underlying matter which, as we know, is by nature blind and mechanical (jaḍa). Dharma is the law of the former and karma that of the latter. Buddha repudiates all such metaphysics as of little use in practical life and retains only dharma and karma by reference to which all ethical activity could be explained in certain concrete terms, intelligible even to the ordinary man. These terms were very much prevalent in his own days and he readily accepted them as basic to his positive stand. But Buddha used both these terms in their strictly ethical connotation and did not desire to pursue them in their metaphysical implications as the *Gītā* before him had done.

However, after Buddha's death there came to be felt the need to work out the various implications of both these concepts and in this, strange to say, the results were precisely those which the *Gīiā* had already arrived at. Buddha came to be looked upon as an incarnation of the Supreme God, and

even the discipline of bhakti came to be advocated as a means to attaining a living communion with Him. Dharma was the ideal of all virtuous deeds and Buddha came to be conceived as its embodiment (dharma-kāya). It is in this sense that he is regarded as God (Bhagavān).[11] As such, he is possessed of infinite powers and perfections. The most prominent feature of Buddha-God is his nature as mahā-karuṇā. He is always compassionate towards his creatures and even incarnates to put them on the path of salvation.

There are Buddhas who have attained enlightenment by following the path shown by Buddha. Tbe historical Buddha was an incarnation of Buddha-God, and he incarnates from time to time to save his creatures from sorrow and suffering. So every aspirant after buddhahood undertakes activities with a view to relieving others of their various afflictions and miseries. It is in this way that they can attain to the Ideal known as "bodhisattva" or knowledge of the true nature of Being. The goal is often spoken of as consisting in the realization of the highest perfection of dharma so as to be more like Buddha-God who is its enbodiment (dharma-kāya). As the *Dīgha Nikāya* puts it, 'Live by treating yourself as light and refuge, and none other—having dharma as light and refuge and none other'.[12] This is the supreme state on the attainment of which the bodhisattva gives up completely all egoistic attachments and impulsions and works solely for the good of all living creatures. This is the ideal which approximates to that of one's being "dharmātman" as taught in the *Gītā*.

IV

Equally noteworthy is the attempt made by Prabhākara of the Pūrvamīmāṁsā school to define moksha in terms of the concept of dharma, or what he prefers to call, "*apūrva*". Prabhākara maintains that apūrva is the unconditional law of our essential selfhood, and any human activity rightly to be called moral or good must be the fruit and flower of this law, and this alone. Apūrva is a law on which I and you—in fact all human beings—ought to act in order to manifest it in its natural integrity. This law seeks to reinforce itself in and through the volition and comes to be experienced as an imperative unconditionally and abstolutely binding on all *human* beings alike. Thus, under human conditions apūrva comes to be experienced as a moral command or niyoga—a command whose spirit is ever universal and impersonal. An action can be regarded as moral only because it is rooted in the spirit of niyoga and can thereby claim to be a model for all others. Its goodness does not depend on any extraneous agency or purpose. It is good in itself, absolutely and unconditionally and its purpose is immanent in itself, (svayam prayojanam-bhūta).[13] In all duties it is the eternal spirit of apūrva—or niyoga under human limitations—which strives to emerge as its own goal and its own purpose, but it is often thwarted in this attempt by various natural desires and inclinations. This goal is no other than the realization of niyoga itself. The highest purpose is realized in the realization of niyoga (niyogasiddhireva purushārtham). If the nature of all truly moral activity is niyoga, the highest good can consist in nothing else but in the realization thereof as such.

The will has remained autonomous in all its actions throughout its association with human limitations, and the good can consist only in that state wherein such an autonomy is fully consummated. It is then, patently wrong to suggest that the Prābhākara ethics is "mechanical" or aims at nothing "human". The highest laws which can activate the soul is intrinsic to its nature and it is this alone which fully manifests itself in the state of moksha. In every activity there is the promise and potency of something which eludes our grasp. We appropriate more and more of it when more and more of it becomes the motive of all our actions. What we achieve is only a fraction of the whole we have to achieve. It is in this sense, then, that apūrva alone can be said to be the ideal of all our actions (apūrvam hi kriyāsādhyam). This is the ideal which consummates when niyoga has been realized. This is called "niyoga-siddhi" and is almost the same as the *Gītā's* conception of "naishkarmya-siddhi". It means the self's attaining a state wherein it finds its law as absolutely perfect, with no trace of any compulsion or constraint. It is here that the self discovers its true freedom and autonomy and ever abides in its selfhood. Having been purified of all defilements it is pure as "self" and nothing has accrued to it or disappeared from it. Bliss is a foreign element and that is why the self in the state of perfection is conceived, unlike the *Gītā*, as being without bliss or any such experience. If there remains no pain, there remains no susceptibility to pleasure either. Both have no meaning for a perfect self, because their underlying causes and conditions have been wholly eliminated. What subsequently remains is only the self and nothing

but that. Since there is nothing over and above the self, it is Brahman of the *Gītā*. There is nothing like attaining equivalence with any other agency. The perfect self alone exists and it is fully all of a piece.

We may, in passing, point out here an interesting development in the Hindu ethical thought. The Nyāya-Vaisheshika school was highly critical of the early Vedānta on the ground that it accepted the ultimacy of a transcendent reality, called Brahman. Consequently, the Nyāya-Vaisheshikas repudiated the concept of Brahman as the absolute spirit and retained only the notions of God and dharma as indispensable to all explanation of the two aspects of the universe, the spiritual and physical. The Prābhākaras went only one step further to bring this line of reasoning to its logical conclusion : they repudiated the concept of God as simply redundant or superficial and retained only dharma or apūrva. It is in terms of this notion that both ethics and religion come to acquire their own spheres and significance. If the good is to be really objective and eternal, it must be found in what the self achieves in its own law. And in this task Prabhākara was singularly successful. The attempt he made was unique in the sense that all his contemporaries talked every time of the reality of soul, yet did not care to explain ethical activity and ethical goodness in terms of its native capability. He maintained that, if the self is the good, an activity can be called good only when it is determined by its law. It is then in the realization of a state of absolute determination of the moral law that goodness in its full measure can be attained.

V

These are the bare outlines of a certain line of reasoning which found favour with certain prominent Indian philosophers. Certain schools, like the Nyāya-Vaisheshika, conceive of dharma as being only the quality of soul (ātma-guṇa), while the Sāṁkhya conceives of it as being an attribute of intellect, and not of the self.[14] But then the question arises : if dharma is not an attribute of self, how can it operate in the determination of an activity and ensure the attainment of goodness (niḥshreyasa) ? Intellect, it is argud, is a product of prakriti (not-self) and cannot be the ground of dharma as a conscious, spiritual agency. If it is said that intellect becomes conscious by virtue of its being nearest to self, the difficulty still remains how it can absorb therein the consciousness of the self, for it is blind and opaque by nature ? Unable to distinguish between the self as beyond all determinations and the self as a moral agent, the Sāṁkhya thought only of the former. That is why there is little ethics in the school. The negative ideal of 'non-discrimination' (aviveka) has little relevance to ethical activity.

Let us note here that for many Indian systems dharma is in some sense an attribute of the self. The ultimate state is, therefore, defined not in terms of this attribute, but in terms of the self itself. Even the *Gītā* agrees that in the ultimate state dharma is fully transcended and what then remains is only the self. But so long as the self remains associated with the not-self dharma is one of those discipliness whereby this state could be attained. This is quite in consonance with the assertion that, if dharma is the basic motive behind all our acti-

vities, dharma alone should be the ideal to be attained thereby. For, it is in this sense alone that the soul can be said to remain truly autonomous even in the last stage of its perfection.

Notes

1. *Naishkarmya-siddhi*, iv. 69.
2. Charles A. Moore, 'Metaphysics and Ethics in East and West in *Essays in East-West Philosophy*, p. 405.
3. Brih. Up., II. iv. 12-14.
4. B.G., iii. 2.
5. B.G., ix. 31.
6. B.G., ix. 2.
7. B.G., xiv., 2.
8. B.G., v. xii. 5.
9. BG., xviii. 66.
10. BG., v. 14-15.
11. 'We see here the influence of the doctrine of *bhakti* known to us from the *Bhagavad-Gītā* and it is most probable that it was the *Bhagavad-Gītā* itself which influenced the development of the Mahāyāna'. Winternitz, *History of Indian Literature*, Vol. II, p. 229.
12. ii. 100.
13. *Tantra-rahasya*, p. 70.
14. *Sāṁkhya-pravachanasūtra*, v. 20-25.

GLOSSARY OF SANSKRIT TERMS

ahaṁkāra—The satisfaction of ego as the only aim of all activity and pursuit ; principle of egoism in the Sāṁkhya system.
adharma—Action performed contrary to the law of morality.
ajñāna(avidyā)—Ignorance about the objective truth, knowledge or reality.
Antaryāmin—God as the dweller in heart.
apūrva—The Prābhākara conception of moral law as the ground of the moral order of the universe.
arhat—The Jaina conception of an enlightened soul.
ārya satya—The four noble truths taught by Buddha, viz. there is suffering (duḥkha), there is the cause of this suffering (duḥkha-samudāya), this suffering can be overcome (duḥkha-nirodha), and finally, there is the procedure whereby this suffering can be removed (duḥkha-nirodha-mārga).
āshrama-dharma—The respective duties pertaining to the four āshramas.
ashṭāngika-mārga—The eight-fold path preparatory to enlightenment taught by Buddha.
ātman—The pure self as the reality about man.
ātma-shuddhi—Purification of the self as an aid to perfection.
aviveka—Absence of the sense of proper discrimination between what is real and what is unreal, good and bad.
bandhana—Human bondage.
bhakti—Devotion to personal God.
bhakti-yoga—The discipline of devotion taught by the theistic schools.
Boddhi-sattva—The Buddhist conception of an enlightened person who works for the spiritual regeneration of mankind.
Brahman—The highest reality in the *Gītā*, Upanishads and Advaita-Vedānta of Shaṁkara.
Brāhmin—The priest teachers as occupying the highest position in the Hindu social order.
Brahma-vidyā—The metaphysics of the ultimate reality.
buddhi—Intellect as an evolute of Prakriti.
buddhi-yoga—The discipline of intellectual grasp of the reality.
dharma—Metaphysically, it connotes the moral law as the ultimate ground of explanation of the universe ; ethically it stands for the norm of righteousness.
dharmakāya—The Buddhist conception of reality as the moral law.
dharmātman—The soul as the essence of the moral law.
guṇa—Quality or attribute of an object of Prakriti.

guṇātīta—An enlightened individual who has transcended the realm of the three guṇas.

ishṭa—Anything desired as the good.

Īshvara—The Hindu conception of personal God as the ruler of the world.

jīva—The soul under human limitations.

jīvan-mukti—Liberation attained within the span of human life.

jñāna—Knowledge of the objective truth.

jñāna-yoga—The discipline of growth and development of spiritual inwardness.

kāma—Pursuit of pleasure of sex and also aesthetic enjoyment.

karma—Any voluntary, purposeful deed.

karma-yoga—The path of action as determined by the rational self.

karmādhyaksha—God as the supreme judge of the moral quality of human deeds.

karma-phala—the result of activity.

karma-phala-dātā—God as the apportioner of joys and sorrows as the reward for the actions performed by men.

Līlā—God's creation without any motive.

māyā—the unreal character of the world.

moksha—the highest state of perfection.

nirvāṇa—the Buddhist ideal of enlightenment.

nishkāma-karma—actions performed without the desire for their fruit.

niyoga—the moral command categorically binding on every human will.

niḥshreyasa—the highest good.

Prakriti—the realm of physical universe.

purusha—souls or pure consciousness.

rita—the spiritual principle as the ultimate truth about man and world.

saṁsāra—the realm of good and evil.

satya—truth as the ultimate principle or virtue of human conduct.

sthitaprajña—one who is established in Spirit.

Upanishads—the Hindu texts seeking to lay bare the nature of ultimate truth, Brahman.

varṇa—station one occupies in society.

varṇāshrama-dharma—duties relative to one's station and stage in life.

vidyā—spiritual knowledge.

vijñāna—knowledge of the world of objects.

yoga—any discipline of spiritual enlightenment.

INDEX